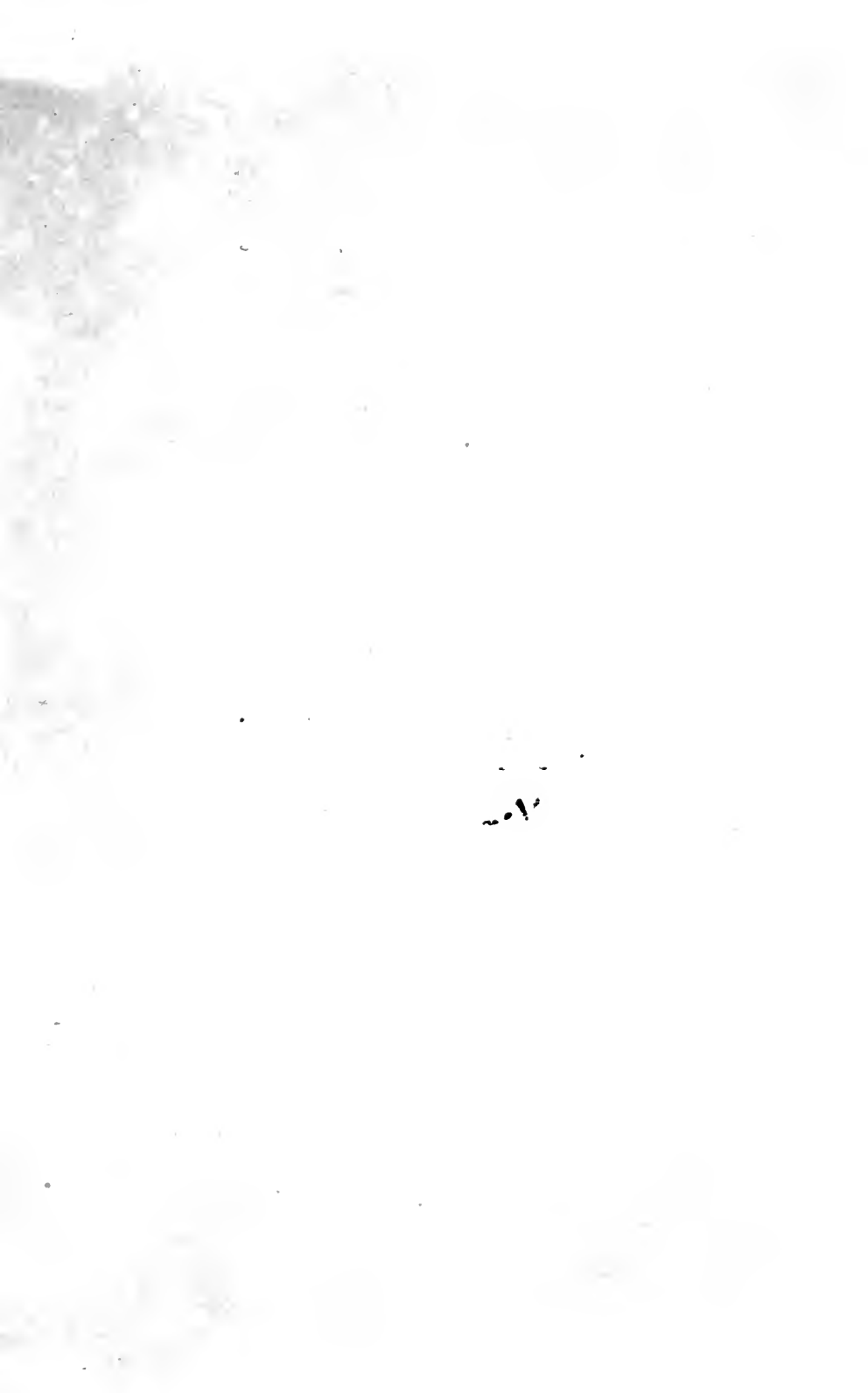




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THE PARSON O' DUMFORD.

VOL. III.

THE
PARSON O' DUMFORD.

A Tale.

BY
GEORGE MANVILLE FENN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. III.

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PARSON O' DUMFORD.

CHAPTER I.

RICHARD BEGINS TO WOO.

THE vicar's visits to the Big House became fewer, for he could not but see that Richard Glaire, in spite of all that had passed, was more and more embittered against him. He was very quiet, and ceased to be insulting, but there was a malicious look in his eye, an ill-concealed air of jealousy in his glance, whenever the vicar spoke to Eve, that told of his feelings. In fact, Richard vowed that the lesson was chosen because he went to church that day, and if ever opportunity served he would be revenged.

Opportunity was serving him, for, like Mrs.

Glaire, he saw but too plainly what the vicar's feelings were towards Eve—feelings that made him grind his teeth whenever they were together, and which finally brought on a fresh quarrel with his mother.

It was one morning when Mrs. Glaire had been appealing to him to reopen the works.

"Not yet," he said. "I should have done it before now if they hadn't been such beastly cowards. I'll give 'em a good lesson this time."

"But you are losing heavily, Richard," said Mrs. Glaire.

"Yes," he said, maliciously. "I like to lose heavily when I can get my money's worth; and I'm punishing them, so I don't care."

"But, do you know, that if your conduct does not alter, you'll lose something for which you will never forgive yourself?"

"What's that?" he said, eagerly.

"Your cousin."

He caught his mother sharply by the wrist, and looked her full in the face.

"You've been plotting for this, mother?"

"Indeed, no, my son."

"Do you want me to marry Eve?"

"You know I do."

"Then why do you encourage that cursed prig of a parson here?"

"Because he has shown himself a good friend to me and mine."

"Bah!" said Richard. "I won't have it. He shall come no more. Look here, mother; you don't believe that I've got Daisy Banks away?"

"No, Richard, I never have believed it," said Mrs. Glaire, meeting his eye, and responding without hesitation.

"Well, look here, then, I tell you what. I'm going to quiet down."

"Dick, my own brave boy," cried Mrs. Glaire, hysterically, as she threw her arms round his neck.

"There, don't be stupid," he said, carelessly repulsing her, after she had kissed him passion-

ately. "I was going to say I'm sick of all this cursed worry, and I shall open the works soon."

"Yes, my dear boy, yes."

"And suppose, to settle all this rumour about Daisy Banks, I marry Eve?"

"My darling boy," sobbed Mrs. Glaire; "it is the wish of my life. You make me so happy."

"There, don't, mother; how can I talk to you if you keep pawing me about like that? Look here, you're making my face all wet."

"Yes, yes, my dear boy, it's very foolish, and I'll control myself."

"There, look at them," said Richard, in a low whisper, as he pointed out of the window, to where Eve and the vicar were walking together on the lawn. "Do you see that, mother?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Glaire, uneasily.

"Do you know he's making up to Eve?"

He looked at her searchingly.

“I cannot help thinking that he admires her, Richard ; but I am sure Eve thinks of no one but you.”

“Then curse him, he shall see me marry her,” said Richard, eagerly. “You want it to be, mother, and it shall be—soon. Eve won’t mind, and you’ll settle it all with her, and then I’m not going to have him here any more.”

“Don’t talk like that, my boy,” said Mrs. Glaire ; “but I do think it would be for your happiness if you were married.”

As she spoke, the question seemed to be asked her—Was it for Eve’s good ? and a cold, chilly feeling of misery came over her, as she felt that she was destroying the young life of the girl who had been to her almost more than a daughter.

“That’s settled then, is it, mother ? ” said Richard, lightly.

“Yes, my boy, indeed yes,” said Mrs. Glaire, throwing off her momentary feeling of depres-

sion, and telling herself that it was for the best, and that so good a wife should be the saving of her son. Besides, it was for this that she had been working, and now that there was to be the fruition of her hopes, she felt that she must not hang back.

Richard was already out on the lawn, going up to where the vicar and Eve were talking about flowers, and it galled the young man to see the bright happy look pass away as he approached, and not come back.

The vicar spoke pleasantly to Richard, but the replies were monosyllables, and an awkward pause was ended by the coming of Mrs. Glaire, who soon after returned into the house with their visitor, while Richard led his cousin down to the bottom of the garden, and, to her surprise, asked her to sit down.

"Look here, Eve," he said, shortly, "I've been talking to the old lady about our being married."

"Our being married, Richard?" said Eve, turning pale and starting.

“Yes, our being married,” he said, sharply. “What are you starting for, you little goose? Any one would think it was something new.”

“It came upon me like a surprise,” said Eve, catching her breath, and speaking quickly. “I did not expect it.”

“Gammon!” said the young man, coarsely. “Why, you’ve been expecting it for months.”

“Indeed no, Richard,” she said, eagerly.

“Then you ought to have been,” he continued. “You know the old girl wishes it.”

“Yes, Richard,” she faltered, with her forehead becoming rugged, and her lower lip quivering, “I know that.”

“Well, we’ve talked it over, and she thinks like I do, that if we’re married it will settle all this rubbish about Daisy Banks.”

“Oh, Richard! Richard!” she cried, pitifully; and she rose to run away, but he caught her wrist, and forced her back into the seat.

“Don’t be a little stupid,” he said. “Why,

that was only a silly flirtation, and I don't care a *son* for the girl."

"Let me go in, Richard, please," she sobbed.

"Not till I've done," he said, with a half laugh. "Look here, Eve, dear ; you are not such a little silly as to think that I know where Daisy is, or that I took her away ?"

"Tell me, on your word of honour, Richard, that you don't know where she is," said Eve, simply, "and I shall believe you."

"'Pon my word of honour, I don't know where she is ; and I didn't take her away ; and I didn't send her away ; and I don't care a fig where she is, and if I never see her again."

"Richard !"

"There now, are you satisfied ?" he cried.

"I believe you, Richard," she said, ceasing to resist, but sitting back in the garden seat, and looking dreamily away.

"That's all right, then," he said. "Well,

then, now we can talk about when the wedding is to be."

"No, no, Richard ; not now, not now," she cried piteously, as she strove once more to get away.

"But we will, though," said the young man, flushing at her resistance. "It's all been settled long enough that you were to be my wife, so let's have none of your 'not nows,' miss."

"Let me go into the house, please, Richard," said Eve, coldly.

"Yes, my dear, when we've settled the wedding-day," said Richard.

"We cannot settle that now, Richard," said Eve.

"And why not, pray ?"

"Because," she said, with her heart beating and her voice faltering, "I cannot forget for certainly a year or two, that which has taken place during the past few weeks."

"What ?" he shouted.

"I think you understand me, Richard," said the girl, quietly, and making no effort now to free the wrist he so tightly held.

"Yes," he said, flushing with passion, "I do understand. You wish to throw me over because you have been angling for and catching that cursed intriguing parson."

"Richard!" cried Eve, turning red and stamping her foot upon the ground, "I will not stop and listen to such language."

"And in a passion, too," he said, mockingly, "because her favourite is spoken of; but it won't do, madam. You're promised to me, and I wish the wedding to take place as soon as it can. Don't you think I'm going to let that beggarly meddling priest come between us."

"This is as cowardly as it is unjustifiable, Richard," exclaimed Eve.

"Is it?" he retorted. "Don't you think I'm blind. I've seen your soft looks at him; and, curse him, if he comes here again I'll

strangle him—an insidious crafty Jesuit. But don't you think me such a child as to believe I'm to be treated like this."

"You are hurting my wrist, Richard," said Eve, coldly, and speaking firmly now, for as her cousin began to bluster she grew calm.

"Hang your wrist," he said angrily; "my hands are not so tender as the parson's, I suppose."

"Richard," she said, with her voice trembling as she spoke, "Mr. Selwood has always been to me as a gentlemanly, very kind friend, and to you the best of friends."

"D——n his friendship," said Richard, looking ugly in his wrath. "He's my enemy, and always has been, and he's trying to win you away. Ah! I know what it means: I'm to be thrown over, and you take up with him."

"Richard, this is as coarse as it is cruel and unjust," cried Eve, now regularly roused; "and I will not submit to it. Mr. Selwood is nothing to me but a friend."

“Indeed!” said Richard, with a sneer; “then pray what may this great change mean?”

“Mean!” she cried, scornfully; and Richard’s eyes lit up, for he thought he had never seen her look so attractive before, “it means that you have cruelly outraged my feelings by your wickedness and deceit.”

“My deceit!” he cried.

“Yes,” she said, with contempt: “have you forgotten what I saw that evening in Ranby Wood? Have you forgotten the past year’s neglect and contemptuous indifference to all my affection? Shame on you, Richard; shame! You ask me to be your wife, and tell me I am promised to you. I am; but you have broken the ties, and if I could forgive you, it must be years hence, when I have learned the truth of your sorrow for what is past.”

Before he could recover from his surprise, she had snatched away her hand to run, frightened and sobbing, to her own room, where she

threw herself upon her knees, to weep and bewail her wickedness, for she was beginning to feel that there was some truth in her cousin's words, and that she had committed a sin, for whose enormity there could be no pardon.

“What is to become of me?” she wailed in her misery, as she went to her dressing-table, and started back in affright at her hot, flushed face. “Oh, is it true that I have behaved as he says, and can Mr. Selwood have seen my boldness?”

She sank into a chair to cover her face with her hands, but only to start and utter a faint cry as she felt them drawn away, and saw that Mrs. Glaire was looking eagerly down upon her flushed and fevered cheeks.

CHAPTER II.

SIM SLEE'S BROTHERHOOD.

MANY of Richard Glaire's workmen belonged to one of the regular trades' unions, from which they received counsel and assistance, and these men held Sim Slee's movements in the most utter contempt. For his part, the above-named worthy returned the contempt, looking down upon trades' unions as not being of sufficiently advanced notions for him, and praising up his own brotherhood to all who were weak enough to listen.

The brotherhood, as he called it, was entirely his own invention, as far as Dumford was concerned ; but it was really based upon an absurd institution that had place in London, and maintained a weak and sickly growth, being

wanting in all the good qualities of the regular unions, and embracing every one of their faults.

But it pleased Sim Slee, who went upon the motto *Aut Cæsar aut nullus*. In his own brotherhood he was chief, chairman, father, or patriarch. In the regular trades' union he would have been only Sim Slee, an individual largely held in contempt.

It was a great night at the Bull and Cucumber, for the brotherhood was to hold a secret meeting on the subject of the lock-out. Robinson; the landlord, took a great interest in the proceedings, and wanted to see all; but Sim Slee and one or two more leaders of the secret society condescended only to allow the inquiring mind to see to the arrangement of the tables and forms; and then, as the brotherhood assembled in secret conclave, they were ushered in with great ceremony, and every man seemed to be impressed with the solemnity.

In fact, the room was lit up for the occasion, curtains were tacked over the two windows,

and flags were arranged on the walls, each flag bearing a device in tinsel. On one were the words :—

“THE HORNY HAND IS THE NATION’S NEED.”

On another :—

“LABOUR CONQUERS ALL.”

While over the president’s chair, or, as Sim had christened himself, “the Grand Brother,” was a roughly-drawn representation of the familiar skull and cross bones.

On the table were two stage swords, drawn from their sheaths, and laid crosswise ; and at the door were a couple of sentries, over the said door being tacked the motto—“Free and Equal.”

It was a great night, and every man of Sim’s partisans looked solemn, but mugs of ale and long clay pipes were not excluded from the two tables, at which sat about a dozen men, as many more standing where they could find room.

There was a ridiculous aspect to the affair,

but mingled with it was a grim look of determination, and many a stern face there wore an aspect that Richard Glaire would not have cared to see, even though he might have scoffed at the meeting, and called the men fools and idiots.

Sim Slee was the great gun of the evening, and he wore his plaid vest very much open, to display a clean shirt, at the edge of whose front fold it was observable that Mrs. Slee's "scithers" had been at work, to take off what she termed the "dwiny" ends ; but the buttons refused to remain on terms of intimacy with their holes, with the consequence that the front gaped widely.

But Sim Slee was too important and excited to notice this, for he was busy over a book before him, and papers, and constantly in communication with the tall, heavy-looking man in black, Mr. Silas Barker, the deputation from London, who was to help the brotherhood through their difficulties, and who had

promised to coach and assist Sim in the great speech he was to make that evening.

At last all seemed about settled, and Sim rose to tap the table with a small wooden hammer, when he sat down again suddenly, for three loud knocks were heard at the door.

"Who knocks without?" said the first sentry.

"Brotherly love," said a voice without.

"What does it bring?" said the second sentry.

"Ruin and death," was the reply.

"Enter ruin and death," said the first sentry; the door was opened, two men entered, Sim Slee looked solemn, and everybody seemed very much impressed.

The door being closed, and silence procured, Sim Slee rose, and there was a great deal of tapping on the table, to which Sim bowed, frowned, and thrust one hand into his vest. At least he meant so to do, but it went inside the gaping shirt.

"Brother paytriots and sitterzens," he commenced, "I think as we are all assembled here."

Just then a knocking was heard without.

"Ah, theer's some un else," said Sim, and he sat down, while the sentries repeated their formula; the voices outside replied in due order, with the requisite pass-words, and three more entered to swell the little crowd. Sim then rose again, more important than ever.

"Now, then, brother sitterzens," he began, "as I believe all the paytriots are here, we will now *proceed* to business."

"Howd hard a minnit," said Big Harry, who occupied a central position, "I want another gill o' ale."

Sim hammered the table with his little mallet, and exclaimed angrily,

"Yow can't hev it now: don't you see the brotherhood is setting?"

"'Arf on 'em's a stanning," said Big Harry,

with a grin; "and if you're goin' to hev all this dry wuck, I must wet it."

"Hee-ar! hee-ar!" shouted two or three voices.

"But don't yow see as the brotherhood is a setting?" cried Sim. "The door is closed now, and we're in secret conclave."

"I don't keer nowt about no secret concave," growled Big Harry. "A mun hev another gill o' ale."

"Let's hev some more drink, then," cried several voices.

"Yow can't, I tell you," cried Sim. "We're a setting wi' closed doors."

"Open 'em, then," said Harry, "or I will. Here, summun, a gill o' ale."

"And I wants some 'bacco," said another voice.

Sim hammered away at the board for a bit, when Harry exclaimed, leaning his great arms on the table, and grinning,

"Say, lads, I niver see owd Simmy handle a harmmer like that up at th' wucks."

"Silence!" roared Sim, in the midst of a hearty laugh from the men. "Fellow paytriot and sitterzens, as Grand Brother of this order, I say——eh, what?"

Sim leaned down to the deputation, who had pulled his sleeve.

"Better let them have in the drink," whispered Mr. Barker, "it makes 'em more trackable."

"All raight," said Sim, in an ill-used tone. "Here, send out for what's wanted, you two at the door, for no one isn't to enter."

There was a bustle at the door after this, and various orders were shouted downstairs, and eagerly responded to by the landlord, who wanted to bring all in, but was stayed by the sentries.

"Here, I say," said Sim to Mr. Barker, "I shall lose all that speech 'fore I begin, if I have to wait much longer."

"I'll prompt you," said Barker.

"Eh?" said Sim.

"I'll prompt you—help you."

"Oh, all right; thankey. Kiver up them motters till the door's shoot close," he continued aloud; but as the door was on the point of being closed, Sim's order was not obeyed; and the ale and tobacco being handed to those who demanded them, Sim once more rose to begin, but only for a fresh clamour to arise from another party, whose "moogs" were empty, and while these were being filled, the swords were covered with a coat, and the mottoes turned to the wall.

At length all were satisfied, and Sim Slee rose for the speech of the evening.

"Brother workmen, mates, paytriots, and fellow sitterzens o' Doomford"—

"He—ar, he—ar!"

"We are met here to-night, honoured by the presence o' Brother Silas Barker."

"He—ar, he—ar," and a "hooray."

"And Brother Silas Barker is delicate, from the payrent lodge o' Brothers in London."

"Drink along o' me, mate," growled Big Harry, holding out his mug to the deputation, "that'll keep you from being delicate."

"You, Harry," cried Sim, "don't interrupt. You ain't one of our most trustworthy brothers. You've fote on the wrong side afore now."

"I'll faight yow for a gill o' ale any day, Simmy Slee," said Harry, winking solemnly across the table at a mate.

"Don't you int'rupt the meeting wi' ignorant remarks," said Sim, taking no notice of the challenge. "I said delicate fro' the — fro' the—"

"Payrent society," said Mr. Barker, promptly.

"All raight, I know," said Sim, pettishly; "fro' payrent society. Came down to Doomford to tell us suff'ring wuckmen as the eyes o' the Bri'sh wucking man i' London and all the world is upon us."

There was vociferous cheering at this, during which Big Harry confidentially informed his

mate across the table, that he'd "Tak' Sim Slee wi' one hand tied behind him, and t'other chap, too, one down and t'other come on."

"We're met together here, mates — met together," continued Sim, whose flow of oratory had not yet begun, but who was gradually warming — "met together, mates, to bring things to a big crisis, and let the thunder of the power of the sons of labour—"

"Here, let's hev in some more ale," shouted some one at the other end.

"Why can't yow be quite? interrupting that how," cried Sim, remonstrating. "Yow can't hev no more ale till the debate's ended. Do you want to hev the mummy—mummy—"

"Course we don't," said Big Harry, aloud. "But who's him?"

"I say," cried Sim, angrily, "do you want to have the mummy—mummy"—then angrily to Barker, "Why don't you tell a fellow?"

"Myrmidons—myrmidons of"—whispered Barker.

"All raight, all raight," said Sim, impatiently, "I know—mummy—mummidons of a brutal holygarchy down upon us?"

"And hale us off," whispered Barker, for Sim had evidently forgotten his speech.

"Yes, yes, I know," whispered Sim. Then aloud, "And hale us off"—

"Hear, hear!" roared Harry, hammering his empty mug on the table; "raight, lad, raight. Here, sum un, tell the mummy to bring the ale."

"Sit down, Harry," shouted Sim. "I say hale us off to fresh chains and slavery. I say, mates," cried Sim, now growing excited, and waving his hands about, "as the holygartchy of a brutal mummidom."

"No, no," whispered Barker, behind his hand, "Myrmidons of a brutal oligarchy."

"Yes, yes, I know," cried Sim; "but they don't. It's all the same to them. Yes, mates, a brutal mummidom, and a holygartchy, and as I was a saying, our fellow sittyzens in

London have been a wackin o' 'em oop. They've gone arm in arm, in their horny-handed strength, like brave sons of tyle, with gentlemen playing their bands o' music."

"Hear, hear!"

"And colours flying"—

"Hear, hear!" and a great deal of mug rattling on the table.

"And made Pall Mall—Pall Mall—Pall Mall"—

"Hear, hear!"

"Go on," whispered Barker, "that's it—echo to their warlike tread."

"Echo to the warlike tread o' their heavy boots," cried Sim, banging his hand down upon the table.

"Hear, hear!"

"Till the bloated holygarchs a sitting in their bloated palluses abloating their sens."

"Brayvo, lad," shouted Big Harry; "that's faine."

"Set down and shouthered wi' fear," continued Sim; "as they—as they—do be a bit sharper," he whispered to Barker. .

"Saw the nation rising in its might," whispered the prompter.

"Saw the nation rising up wi' all its might and main," cried Sim. Then to Barker, "Shall I put it into 'em now?"

"Yes, yes; they're ripe enough," was the answer.

"And now, mates," continued Sim, "it's time as we rose up in our might, and showed him as is starving our wives and bairns what we can do when we're trampled down, and that like the wums as is tread on, we can turn and sting the heel o' the oppressors."

"Good, good! Go on," said the deputation, rubbing its hands.

"Are we to see a maulkin like Dickey Glaire, because he is an employer, always getting fat on the sweat of a pore man's brow?"

"Go on! go on! Capital!" whispered Barker. "Fine himage."

"What's a himage?" said Sim, stopped in his flow.

"All right, go on, man," whispered Barker; "I only said fine himage."

"As my friend and brother the deppitation says," continued Sim, "Dicky Glaire's a fine image to sit on all us like an old man o' the mountains."

"No, no, I didn't," whispered Barker.

"You did," whispered Sim. "I heerd you."

"Go on," whispered back Barker; "the time has come—go on; beautiful."

"And the time has come to go on beautiful," said Sim, waving his arms.

"No, no," whispered Barker.

"I wish yow'd howd thee tongue altogether," whispered Sim. "You do nowt but put me out."

"Go on, brayvo!" cried the men.

"Now, don't you interrupt me no more,"

whispered Sim, in an aggrieved tone ; " that aint a bit like as you writ it down, and I shall say it my own way-er. And, mates," he continued aloud, " the time has come when we've got to tak' our heads from under the despot's heels, when we've got to show 'em 'ow they depends upon the sons of tyle ; and teach 'em as all men's ekal, made o' the same flesh and blood, eddication or no eddication ; and if Dickey Glaire won't gi'e uz a fair day's wuck for a fair day's pay."

" No, no, other way on," whispered the deputation.

" You let me alone ; I'm getting on better wi'out you," whispered Sim. Then aloud, " They'll hev' to change places wi' us, and see how they like it then. Now, who's that ?" cried Sim, as a loud knocking was heard. " A man can't get a word in edgeways."

" Who knocks wi'out ?" cried the first sentry.

" Open the door," said a loud voice.

" Who knocks wi'out ?" said the sentry again.

"Open the door, fool!" said the rough voice again.

"Give the pass-word," said the sentry.

"Open the door before I kick it down," cried the voice.

"Look out, lads," cried Sim, excitedly, as he left the chair. "It's the police. Tak down them flags, and shove the swords out o' sight. It's the police."

There was a rush, and the flags were hurriedly pulled down and folded up, while the swords were placed under the table.

"Open this door," cried the same loud voice, and a heavy fist was applied to the panel.

"You can't come in, I tell you," cried one of the sentries angrily. "This room's private."

"You'd better tell them to open the door," said the deputation. "They can't touch you; we're within the law. It's a society meeting. Take your seat."

"Open the door, then," said Sim, reluctantly resuming his place, when, as the door was

thrown back, in came Joe Banks, closely followed by Tom Podmore.

“Hooray, lads!” cried Sim, enthusiastically. “I always said as he would. It’s Joe Banks come to join us at last, along wi’ Tom Podmore.”

CHAPTER III.

TO SAVE RICHARD.

"EVE, my child," said Mrs. Glaire, "what is it? Tell me what this means."

"Oh, aunt, aunt," the poor girl sobbed. "Richard—Richard."

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Glaire, drawing her to her breast, and laying her cool soft hands upon the burning brow; "tell me, darling. You have no secrets from me."

"I will—directly—aunt," sobbed Eve; and then, in a burst of passionate grief, "He has been begging me to be his wife."

"And is that so very dreadful, my child?" said Mrs. Glaire.

"And when I told him it could not be

perhaps for years—not till I could freely forgive him—he accused me, so dreadfully.”

“Indeed, child! what did he say?”

“Oh, I could not, cannot tell you,” sobbed Eve.

“Yes, yes, my poor little frightened bird,” said Mrs. Glaire, caressing her, “you can tell me all.”

“I will, aunt,” said the girl, starting up, looking flushed and eager, as she hastily dried her eyes, and speaking now indignantly; “he accused me, aunt, of encouraging Mr. Selwood.”

“And have you, Eve?”

“Oh, aunt dear, never, never.” This with a wondering, almost angry, look.

“And has Mr. Selwood ever made any advances to you, my dear?” said Mrs. Glaire, watching curiously the bright blushing face before her.

“Never, aunt dear, never. He has always been so kind and gentlemanly. Never by word or by look, aunt.”

"No, child, he would not," said Mrs. Glaire, slowly; "he is a gentleman whom we can trust and love."

"Love, aunt?"

"Yes, child, as a very dear friend. But about Richard, Eve. He was very hot and passionate?"

"Yes, aunt. Most cruel to me."

"And you told him you could not forgive him for his cruel neglect and trifling with—with that poor girl?"

"Yes, aunt," said Eve, struggling hard to keep up her firmness; "but not quite all you say. I did not tell him I would not forgive him."

"What then, my child?"

"That I could not forgive him yet, not till I saw that he was truly sorry for the past."

"You told him this, Eve?"

"Yes, aunt dear. Was it wrong?"

"Wrong, my child," said Mrs. Glaire, embracing her, as the tears started to her eyes.

“No ; it was most maidenly and true. But, Eve, my child, some day you may be a mother—some day you may have a son, over whose welfare your heart will yearn, and for whom you would be ready to do anything—even to committing a crime to save him from a downward course.”

“Aunt !” cried the girl, looking up at her wonderingly, for she was speaking now in eager excited tones.

“Yes, child ; ready to screen him, forgive him, bear the penalty of his sins, anything to save him from pain, suffering, or the retribution he has been calling down upon his head.”

“Oh, aunt,” cried the girl, in awe-stricken tones, “is it like this to be a mother ?”

“No, no, my child : all sons are not like this. But it is a mother’s agony to feel that if her boy turns from the straightforward course, she may herself be perhaps to blame ; that by indulgent weakness, by giving up the reins of government too soon, she may have caused

him to go astray ; and — Eve — Eve — my darling, this is my fate, and it is you alone who can save my boy.”

“ Aunt ! ”

“ Yes, child. He is my boy, my very own, and I have been weak, and let the weeds grow up in him, to the choking of the good qualities he possesses. I have been too proud of him, too glad to see my son taking his position as a gentleman, and a man of the world. It was my proud desire to see him the leading man here at the works—the great man of the town ; and my pride has brought its punishment—has ruined my boy, so that he needs all I can do to save him.”

“ Aunt—dear aunt—pray—pray don't kneel to me,” cried Eve, excitedly, as she saw her aunt's next act.

“ Yes, yes, child, I must—I must ; for it is to you I look alone for help, as God's minister, to save my boy. I—I have sinned for him more deeply than I can tell—more than a life

of repentance can wash out, bringing, as I have, misery upon others, and fresh ill-treatment of my boy ; but you—you—Eve, can save him. We must forgive—you must forgive ; for it is I who am to blame.”

“No, no, aunt.”

“Yes, my child,” cried Mrs. Glaire, clinging to her passionately. “Nothing but the earnest love of a pure, true woman, can save him—the woman who will be his faithful wife, and bless him with her love. Eve, my child, on my knees I ask you to forgive him, now—at once, even as you nightly pray our Father to forgive us our trespasses. Say you will forgive him, that you will blot out all the past, and be his wife ; for it will be the turning-point of his life.”

“Aunt, dear aunt,” sobbed the poor girl, bewildered by the strange outburst of passion from one generally so calm and placid in her ways. “What can I say ? Oh, this is terrible !”

"Terrible, Eve? No, no, child, not terrible to save him we love, for you do love him, Eve?"

"I—I—hope so, aunt."

"Yes, yes, you do. You must, for he is true and good at heart. You will forgive him—for my sake, Eve. Eve, I am on my knees to you. If you have one spark of gratitude for the past, listen to my prayer."

"Aunt, dearest aunt, my more than mother," sobbed Eve, completely carried away by the agony of one who had been everything to her for years and years of her life; "I will do all you wish. I am your child. Tell me what to do, and I will do it; for I love you, dearest aunt, as if you were my own mother."

"I knew it, I knew it, my darling, my own darling," cried Mrs. Glaire, throwing her hands upwards. "Saved, saved! Oh, God! oh, God! Thou hast heard my prayer."

Eve shrank from her for an instant, frightened at her wild appeal, but only for the moment; the next she had thrown herself on

her knees beside her, and the two women were sobbing and caressing each other tenderly, till the calm came after their storm of weeping, and Eve prevailed upon the trembling mother to lie down upon her bed, where exhausted nature at last prevailed, and she sank to sleep. But only to mutter strangely of "Daisy Banks—poor Daisy Banks," and utter at times the most piteous sighs ; while, as Eve watched her, the memory of that which she had promised came upon her with all its force, and a feeling of depression and of utter misery stole over her, so great that she could hardly bear to sit alone.

She had promised to be Richard's wife—promised again, and that it should be soon ; promised to save him, when that strange and wondrous joy, that glorious light of love that was springing up in her breast, frightening her by its intensity, was ever expanding, but must now be crushed out—for ever.

What was she to do ? To save Richard—to

be his wife. Not so hard a task a few months since, but now! Oh, it was dreadful. And yet that was a traitorous feeling that she must crush; and at last, sobbing bitterly, Eve Pelly knelt by her sleeping aunt, and prayed earnestly, as woman ever prayed before, that Murray Selwood might never care for her, and that she might be a good and tender wife to the man who sat at the bottom of the garden smoking a cigar, and uttering a few oaths from time to time against the woman on her knees. What time he also defiled the flowers around the rustic seat, and cut them with his stick, till he started to his feet in an agony of dread, for a shadow fell across him as some one approached noiselessly over the velvet lawn, and looking up, there stood the foreman, gazing full in his face, as he exclaimed—

“Richard Glaire, I’ve come to have a few words wi’ you.”

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW BROTHER.

JOE BANKS stood staring round the room defiantly, while the sentries kept the door ajar.

“Shoot the door, fools,” he said sharply; and then, as it was closed, he turned on Barker, who, rising, said smoothly,

“May I ask what our friend, Mr. Joseph Banks, wants here at a private meeting?”

“Let me tackle him, mate,” said Sim. “Here’s a cheer here, Maister Banks; come an’ sit along-side me. Yow’ve come to join uz then, at last?”

“Yes,” said Banks, shortly, as he beckoned Tom Podmore to his side.

“I always said he would, lads,” cried Sim. “I always said it. He’s seen the error of his

ways, and come to join the brotherhood, and clasp the honest horny hand o' labour. He's a paytriot at heart, is Maister Banks, and I knew as he'd come at last."

"But," said Barker, "our friend is not yet one of the brotherhood."

"What?" said Banks sharply.

"Our friend has not taken the oaths," said Barker.

"Oaths — Brotherhood" — cried Banks. "Don't I tell you I join you? What more do you want?"

"You leave Joe Banks to me, lads, and I'll explain," said Sim, confidentially. "You see, Joe Banks, we binds and ties oursens together wi' oaths like in a holy bond, and sweers brotherly love. Don't you see?"

"Yes, you must be sworn in, Mr. Banks; it's the rule."

"Swear me in, then," said Banks, contemptuously.

Several of the men then advanced, and

Banks and Podmore were seized, while Slee began to place a folded handkerchief across the former's eyes.

"What do you me-an by this mummary?" exclaimed the foreman; and he tried to drag away the handkerchief, but was stopped.

"This is part of the formula for the administration of the oath," said Barker. "Kneel down. Now bring forward the swords."

Two of the men came forward with the swords, which had been extracted from their hiding-place, and as Joe Banks was half forced into a kneeling position, they were held crossed over his head.

"Silence!" exclaimed Barker. "Now, you swear."

"Curse your childish folly!" cried Banks, starting up, tearing the bandage from his eyes, and sending the cross swordsmen flying. "Ye're worse than a set o' bairns in their play-a."

"Haw—haw—haw!" laughed Big Harry. "I niver see such a siaght in my liafe."

"I swear to be faithful brother to you," exclaimed Banks, "and to fight with you against all our enemies."

"That'll do ; that'll do," exclaimed several voices. "We know Joe Banks always does what he says ; he'll do."

"But that wean't do," said Sim. "It aint the oath, you know, Joe Banks, and you must tak' it."

"I'll take no other," cried Banks, shortly. "Wheer's Tom Podmore ?"

Tom was brought forward, bandaged, while Slee and Barker whispered together ; and the majority of the men seemed to look upon the scene as one to be held in great veneration.

"Sweer in Tom Podmore," cried Slee ; and the men with the swords were once more about to perform their theatrical act with the most solemn of faces.

"Stop !" cried Banks, snatching off the bandage. "That's enew o' this stuff. I'll

answer for Tom Podmore. Let's hev deeds, not words."

"I'll go on to explain," said Sim, snatching at the chance for a speech. "I was speaking when you came in, Joe Banks."

"I think you come into the world speaking," cried Joe Banks, roughly. "Get down off that cheer, and say your say like a man."

"This sort of interruption is not parliamentary," cried Sim. "It isn't, is it?"

The gentleman from town shook his head.

"Theer," cried Sim, "the deppitation says as it isn't."

"Look here, men," cried Joe Banks, speaking excitedly, "I come here to-night to join you. You wanted me wi' you before, but I wouldn't come, because I was in the cause o' raight. I wouldn't gi'e up my position as a straightforward man for to faight for a few beggarly shillings a week."

There were some murmurs of discontent

here, but the foreman did not seem to hear them, and went on.

“The side of raight is the side of raight no longer, and I’m wi’ you, for I’ll work no more for one who has done me as great a wrong as he can do.”

“He hev, Joe Banks, he hev, and we’ll let him know it,” cried several.

“No, no,” cried Banks; “no more attacks on him; we’ve had enew o’ that. Strike him through his pocket; let him feel it where we’ve felt it; but mind this, the lad as raises hand again the house where them two women are, raises it again me.”

Amidst the loud cheering that followed, Sim Slee, who would not be repressed, climbed upon the table in front of his chair, shouting—

“He’s roused at last, lads. He’s a-takking the iron foot of the despot from his brow, and come to straike for freedom.

There was a loud cheer at this, and Sim’s vanity was gratified.

“Now,” cried Banks, “what are you going to do? You’ve got some plans?”

“Theer,” cried Sim; “what did I tell you? Didn’t I say as he’d come to uz? Yes, Joe Banks, our new brother, we’re going to set the eyes of all England starting out of its head, to see us strike for our raights. We’re a-going to ——Hey?”

“Stop!” whispered Barker. “See to the doors there. We’ve a man present as isn’t sworn. He must take the oath.”

“Didn’t I say,” cried Joe Banks, fiercely, “that I’d be answerable for him?”

“But I’m not going to join their plans, Joe Banks,” said Tom, in a low voice.

“Raight,” said Banks, shortly. “Go on, Sim Slee.”

“Then look here, mates. Here’s what we’re a-going to do. Bring that theer keg.”

Two men dragged a keg from a cupboard, and placed it on the table.

“Them as is smoking is to go to the other

end of the room," said Sim, and there was a sudden movement amongst the men, the depuration not being the last. "Now then," said Sim, "who's got a knife?"

Joe Banks took a big clasp-knife from his pocket, and threw it upon the table, Sim picking it up, and beginning to open it as he went on talking.

"Here's my plan. We're agoing to open the eyes o' lots of places as thowt they was very big in their way; and—Hello, where didst thou get this knife fro', Joe Banks?—it's mine."

"Then it was thou as coot the bands," cried Joe, seizing him by the throat. "Thou cunning fox, thou'st trapped after all. It's thou as browt all this trouble on uz wi' thy coward's trick. It was thou as clomb into wucks through the window, and coot all the bands, and left thee knife behind to bear witness again thee. Look at him, lads; he canno' say it wean't."

“And he don’t want to,” cried Sim, shaking himself free. “I did it all by my sen as a punishment to a bad maister as knows nowt but nastiness; and now we’re a-going to come down o’ him wi’ tenfold violence. Bands is nowt to what we’re a-going to do.”

There was a cheer at this, and the men who were beginning to be wroth against Sim and his companion, and who would have severely punished him a short time back, lost all thought of the dastardly escapade in the savage attack they meant to make.

“Look here, Joe Banks,” continued Sim, whose words came freely enough now without the aid of the deputation, “we’re a-going to do something as shall let ’em see what your honest British workman can do, when he’s been trampled down, and rises up in his horny-handed majesty to show as he’s a man, and to teach all the masters of England to treat their men as if they were Christians—like brothers as helps ’em to bloat and fatten

on the corn and wine, and oil olive and unney as the horny-handed hand pro——”

“Curse your long-winded speeches!” cried the foreman, savagely, “are you going to talk for ever?”

“Don’t be excited, my friend,” said Barker, smoothly.

“We’re a-going to startle the whole world,” cried Sim, not heeding the interruption, as he stood now with one foot upon the keg; “startle the whole world with the report, and the savour shall go up to make the British workman free. Mates, lads, and fellow-workers, we’re going to——”

“That’s powther, I suppose?” said Banks, pointing to the keg.

“Yes,” cried Sim, “and——”

“You mean to blow up the wucks?” said Banks, with a sombre look in his countenance.

“Dal it all, Joe Banks,” cried Sim, stamping with rage, “what d’yer want to go spoiling

the climax like that how! You didn't make the plans."

"You are going to blow up the place as that cursed smooth-tongued liar will not agree for you to work?"

"Yes," said Sim, sulkily, "that's it."

"Lads," said Banks, "a week ago and I couldn't ha' done this. If he had shown but the least bit as he was sorry for what had passed, I'd ha' forgiven him. But I went to him to-day. I found him sitting in his garden smoking, and careless of the sufferings of his men. I went to him wi'out anger, but humbly, and begged of him to open the wucks again for the sake o' the wives and bairns 'most pining wi' hunger, and then—then"—

Joe Banks put his hand to his throat, for he was choking, but struggling bravely he went on.

"Then I begged on him to give me some tiding o' my poor bairn. I begged it o' him humbly, just to tell me she weer alive, and

well ; and to let me know wheer we might send a line to her ; for, lads, I've been broken and down like, and ready to do owt to get sight o' her again for her mother's sake, for she's 'bout worn out wi' sorrow. I asked him this."

Banks stopped with his face working amidst the most profound silence, while Tom Podmore took his hand, which was heartily pressed, and Big Harry, after rubbing his eyes with his knuckles like a great schoolboy, crossed over, to double up his fists and say—

"Joe Banks, say the word, mun, and I'll go oop t'house, an' crack him like a nut."

"You as has bairns wean't think me an owd fool for this," said Banks, huskily. "Yow can feel for me."

"Ay, owd lad, we do that," rose in chorus ; and then the foreman went on, with his voice gathering strength as he proceeded.

"I asked this of him for you, lads, and for mysen, and he turned upon me, cursed me for an owd fool, and ca'ed me the cause o' all his

troubles. He swore he did'n' know nor keer where my poor bairn might be, and at last I comed awaya trembling all ower me, to wheer Tom Podmore here waited for me i' street; for," he continued, holding out his hands before him half-crooked, "if I'd ha' stayed, I should ha' throttled him wheer he stood; and for his moother's sake, his dead father's sake, and that o' my poor lost bairn, I should ha' repented it till I died."

A low murmur ran through the room, and Sim Slee was about to rise and speak, but several of those present thrust him down, when, with a fierce and lowering countenance, the foreman turned upon him.

"Now," he said, "speak out, mun, what are your plans?"

"The plan is mine," said Sim; "and we go to work this how. We climb in by the little window in the lane, and then go into the low foundry and put two barrels o' powther theer under the middle wall."

Joe Banks nodded.

"Then we lay a train away to the leather, and put a slow match which we fires, comes away, and horny-handed labour triumphs, and the wucks comes down."

"Good!" said Banks, nodding his head. "It will destroy them."

"That 'll do, wean't it?" continued Slee, eagerly.

"Yes, that will do," said Banks, in the midst of silence. "And the powther?"

"That is one barrel," said Barker; "the other is at Sim Slee's. Hadn't you better go on, Brother Slee, and make the arrangements?"

"Yes, brother sitterzens," said Slee, "there's the powther to place, and the train to lay. What do you say to Thuzday, this day week?"

"And when's it to be fired?" said Tom Podmore.

"Same time," said Sim; "it's anniversary o' last turn out, and we strikes for freedom. Who

comes forward like a horny-handed hero to do the deed ?”

“Not me,” said Big Harry. “I aint going to mak’ a Guy Fox o’ *mysen*.”

“Shame on you !” cried Sim. “Rise outer the slime in which you wallows, and in which the iron foot of the despot has crushed you. Rise, base coward, rise.”

“If thee ca’s me a coward, Sim Slee,” growled Harry, ominously, “dal me ef I don’t mak’ all thee bones so sore thee wean’t know thee sen. I’ll faight any two men i’ the room, but dal all barrels o’ powther.”

“Bah !” said Sim, contemptuously. “You’d be a martyr to a holy cause.”

“Come away, now,” whispered Tom Podmore, laying his hand on the foreman’s shoulder.

“Nay, let’s hear them out,” was the reply.

“Ay, that’s all faine enew,” said Big Harry, “but I were in the blast when we cast that bell in the wet mowld.”

"Bah!" cried Sim.

"Well, lad, look here now," said Big Harry, "you're a fine chap to talk; s'pose you do all the martyr wuck your own sen."

"I'm ashamed on you," cried Sim, as this proposal was met by a burst of cheers. "Isn't theer one on you as will rise out of his sloth and slime, and prove hissen a paytriot. Didn't I mak' all the plans? Didn't I invent the plot? Am I to do everything? Hevn't I allays been scrapping about for the cause? Don't let me blush for you all, and feel as there isn't one as'll come forward and lay the train. I'll do it," he continued, looking hard at Banks, who was staring at vacancy, "if no one else comes forward. I'll go and wuck for the holy mission, as I did over the cooting o' the bands, if there's no other paytriot as rises to the height."

Here there was a dead silence, and Barker broke it by saying—

"Had they not better draw lots?"

"Yes," said Sim, enthusiastically.

"Not if I knows it," said Big Harry, thrusting his hands further into his pockets.

"Say the plan ower again, mun," said Banks, in a low voice. "No mouthin', but joost the plan."

"To climb in at the little window."

"Yes."

"Lay the powther under the middle wall."

"Yes."

"Break open the staves to let it out—lay a good train—light a slow match close to the leather (ladder)."

"Yes."

"Run up and get out as you got in."

"Yes," said Joe Banks, softly, "or die."

"And you understand?"

"Yes."

"And the wucks 'll be blown to atoms."

"And what are we to do for wuck then?"
said Big Harry.

"You great maulkin, you get no wuck

now," cried Sim; and the 'big fellow grunted and looked uncomfortable.

"And you will do all this, Sim Slee?" said Banks quietly.

"Who? I?" cried Sim, shrinking away.

Joe Banks looked at him contemptuously, and then turned to the men.

"I'll do it, my lads," he said. "No one knows the old plaace as I know it, and if it's to be blown down, mine's the hand as shall do it. Thuzday night? Good! Be three or four of you theer with the powther under the window, and I'll be ready to tak' it in."

There was a burst of applause at this, and the meeting broke up, the folded flags being carefully buttoned up in Barker's breast, while Sim Slee walked stiffly home, with a sword down each leg of his trousers, and the hilts under his scarlet waistcoat, beneath his arms.

CHAPTER V.

MR. SELWOOD HEARS NEWS.

THERE was a week clear before the plot was to have effect, and the place was wonderfully quiet. The vicar, looking very pale and anxious, was sitting in his study on the morning after the meeting at the Bull, when a note was brought to him from the Big House, and he coloured slightly as he read it.

“Tell the messenger I will be up directly,” he said ; and as the maid left the room, “what is wrong now ? Come, come, be a man.”

He smiled to himself as he took up his hat and stick, and walked up the street, to be greeted here and there with friendly nods.

He was shown at once into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Glaire was seated with Eve,

and after a kindly, sad greeting, the latter left the room.

"I have good news for you, Mr. Selwood," said Mrs. Glaire, smiling, but looking worn and pale.

"I'm very glad," said the vicar, pressing her hand.

"Richard has promised me that if the men do not come in, he will give way and re-open the works."

"And when?" said the vicar, joyfully.

"He will call the men together this day week, for the furnaces to be lit, so as to begin work on the Monday."

"Mrs. Glaire, this is indeed good news," said the vicar. "May I see him and congratulate him?"

"I think it would be better not," said Mrs. Glaire. "But," she continued, watching his face as she spoke, "I have other news for you."

The vicar bowed.

"Yes," she said; "but first of all, though,

these communications are made to you in strict confidence. You must not let the matter be known in the town, because my son would rather that the men gave way."

"If they do not, he really will?"

"He has given me his faithful promise," said Mrs. Glaire, "and he will keep it now."

"I will not doubt him," said the vicar. "I am very, very glad. And your other news?" he said, smiling.

"My son will be married very shortly."

"Married?" said the vicar, starting; "and to Daisy Banks?"

"No!" exclaimed Mrs. Glaire, in a short thick voice, a spasm seeming to catch her, as she spoke. "To his cousin, to whom he is betrothed."

There was a dead silence as the vicar, whose face was of an ashey pallor, looked straight before him at vacancy, while Mrs. Glaire sat watching him, with her hand placed to her side.

"You do not congratulate me," she said at last in a piteous tone. "Mr. Selwood, dear friend—the only friend I can fly to in this time of trouble—you will help me?"

"Help you?" he said in a stony way. "How can I help you?"

"I have striven so for this," she continued, speaking hastily. "They have long been promised to each other, and it will be for the best."

"For the best," he said, slowly repeating her words.

"Richard has been very wild, but he has given me his word now. He has not been what he should, but this marriage will sober and save him. Eve is so sweet, and pure, and good."

"So sweet—and pure—and good," he repeated softly.

"She will influence him so—it will make him a good man."

"If woman's power can redeem, hers will," he said, in the same low tone.

“But you hardly speak—you hardly say a word to me,” cried Mrs. Glaire, piteously; “and I have striven so for this end. I prevailed upon him to end this lock-out, and he has given way to me, and all will be well.”

“Mrs. Glaire,” said the vicar, sternly, “do you believe that your son has inveigled away that poor girl?”

“No, no,” she cried, “I am as certain of his innocence as that I sit here.”

“And Miss Pelly—what does she believe?”

“That he is innocent,” exclaimed Mrs Glaire.

“And—and—does she consent to this union?”

“Yes, yes,” cried Mrs. Glaire eagerly. “She feels hurt, and knows that she makes some sacrifice after my son’s ill-treatment; but she forgives him, knowing that it will save poor Richard, and it is for my sake too.”

“Poor girl!” he said, beneath his breath.

"God bless her ! She is a good, good girl," cried Mrs. Glaire.

"God bless her !" he said softly. "Mrs. Glaire, do you think she loves him ?"

"Yes, yes ; she has told me so a dozen times."

"And you feel that this is for the best ? Would it not be better to let there be a year's term of probation first ? It is a solemn thing this linking of two lives together."

"Oh, yes, it is for the best, Mr. Selwood—dear friend ; and they must not wait. The wedding must be next week."

The vicar rose with the same stony look upon his face ; and, knowing what she did, Mrs. Glaire's heart bled for him, and the tears stole down her cheeks, as she caught his hand and pressed it, but he seemed to heed it not, for he was face to face with a great horror. He had told himself that he could master his passion, and that it was mastered ; but now—now that he was told that the woman he dearly loved

was to become the wife of another, and of such a man, he felt stunned and helpless, and could hardly contain his feelings as he turned and half staggered towards the door.

“Mr. Selwood, you are shocked, you are startled,” cried Mrs. Glaire, clinging to his hand. “You must not go like this.”

He turned to look at her with a sad smile, but he did not speak.

“Eve wishes to see you,” she faltered, hardly daring to say the words.

“To see me?” he cried hoarsely; and her words seemed to galvanise him into life. Then, to himself, “I could not bear it—I could not bear it.”

At that moment the door opened, and he made another effort over himself to regain his composure, as Eve came forward, holding out her hand, which he reverently kissed.

“Aunt has told you, Mr. Selwood,” she said, in a low constrained tone.

“My child,” he said softly, and speaking as a father would to his offspring, “yes.”

She gave a sigh of relief, looking at his cold, sad face, as if she wished to read that which was written beneath a mask of stone.

“Aunt thinks it would be for the best,” she said, speaking slowly, and with a firmness she did not possess. “And it is to be soon.”

He bowed his head, in token of assent.

“I have a favour to ask of you—Mr. Selwood,” said Eve, holding out her trembling hand once more, but he did not take it.

“Yes?” he said, in a low constrained way.

“I want you to forgive Richard, and be friends.”

“Yes, yes; of course,” he said hastily.

“And you will marry us, Mr. Selwood,” continued Eve.

“I? I?” he exclaimed, with a look of horror upon his face. “Oh, no, no: I could not.”

Eve looked at him in a strangely startled

way; and for the moment her calmness seemed to have left her, when Mrs. Glaire interposed.

“For both our sakes; pray do not say that,” she cried; and a curious look passed over the vicar’s face.

“Do you wish it, Miss Pelly?” he said softly.

“Yes; indeed, yes,” exclaimed Eve, gazing in his eyes; and then there was silence for a few moments, when, making a mighty effort over himself, the vicar took a step forward, bent down, and kissed her forehead, and said—

“God bless you! May you be very happy.”

“And you will?” exclaimed Mrs. Glaire.

“Yes,” he said, after a moment’s pause, and with his eyes half closed. “I will perform the ceremony.”

“Thank you—thank you,” exclaimed Mrs. Glaire, as she caught his hand. “Richard, here is Mr. Selwood.”

CHAPTER VI.

JOHN MAINE'S CONFESSION.

“How do?” said Richard, entering from the garden; and he held out his hand sulkily, which the vicar took, and held for a moment.

He was about to speak, to say some words of congratulation—words that he had won a great prize, and that his duty to her was to make amends for the past—but the words would not come, and, bowing, he left the room, and walked hastily from the house, watched by Richard Glaire's malicious eyes. For it was sweet revenge to him to know that the hopes he was sure the vicar felt had been blasted, and that he alone would possess Eve Pelly's love.

“He thought to best me,” muttered Richard;

and he smiled to himself, the feeling of mastering the man he looked upon as his enemy adding piquancy to a marriage that had seemed to him before both troublesome and tame.

Meanwhile the vicar went slowly down the street, with a strange, dazed look ; and more than one observer whispered to his neighbour—

“ Say, lad ; parson hasn’t been takking his drop, sewerly.”

“ Nay, nay ; I’d sooner believe he was ill. It can’t be that,” was the reply.

That same day, when busy out in the fields, sick at heart, and worried, after a short interview with Tom Podmore, John Maine was standing alone, and thinking of the past and present. Of the respite that had come to him, since the two men had visited the town, and of the miserable life he led at the farm, and the way in which Jessie behaved to him now ; for, to his sorrow, it seemed to him that she looked upon him with a kind of horror, and avoided all communication. The keeper, Brough, came

pretty frequently, and certainly she was more gracious to him than to the man who lived with her in the same house and ate at the same table.

Then he recalled that he had had a note from the vicar requesting him to call at the vicarage ; but he had not been, partly from dread, partly from shame.

“But I’ll go,” he said. “I’ll be a man and go ; go at once, and tell him the whole secret ; and be at rest, come what may. Tom says it will be best.”

He sat down beneath a hedge bottom to secure the strap of one of his leggings, when, raising his head, he saw in the distance, crossing one of the stiles, a figure which he knew at a glance was that of one of the men he dreaded—one of those who had done their best to make him another of the Ishmaelites who war against society.

A cold chill passed over him, followed by a hot perspiration, as he watched till the figure

passed out of sight, and then he began to muse.

“Come at last, then. It must be with an object.”

“Let me see,” he thought; “it will be perfectly dark to-night. Nearly new moon. He has come down to see how the land lies, and before morning, unless he’s checkmated, the vicarage will be wrecked, and if anybody opposes them, his life will be in danger.”

“It’s only a part of one’s life,” he said, bitterly, as he started up. “I’ve been a scoundrel, and I thowt I’d grown into a honest man, when I was only a coward. Now the time has come to show myself really honest, and with God’s help I’ll do it.”

Not long after, the vicar was seated with his head resting upon his hand, strengthening himself as he termed it, and fighting hard to quell the misery in his breast, when Mrs. Slee came to the door.

“Yes,” he said, trying to rouse himself,

and wishing for something to give him a strong call upon the strength, energy, and determination lying latent in his breast. "Yes, Mrs. Slee?"

"Here's John Maine fro' the farm wants to see thee, sir."

"Show him in the study, Mrs. Slee; I'll be with him in five minutes." And those minutes he spent in bathing his temples and struggling against his thoughts.

The time had scarcely expired, when he entered the library, to find his visitor standing there, hat in hand, resting upon a stout oak sapling.

"Glad to see you, Maine," said the vicar, kindly. "Could you not find a chair?"

"Thanky, sir, no; I would rather stand. I ought to have been here before, but, like all things we don't want to do, I put it off. I want to tell you something, sir. I want to confess."

"Confess, Maine!" said the vicar, smiling;

"any one would think this was Ireland, and that I was the parish priest."

"I have got something heavy on my conscience, sir," continued Maine, in a hesitating way.

"If I can help you, Maine, I am sure you may trust me," said the vicar.

"I know that, sir; I know that," cried Maine, eagerly. "I want to speak out, but the thoughts of that poor girl keep me back."

"That poor girl!" exclaimed the vicar, looking at the young man's anguish-wrung countenance, and feeling startled for the moment. "Do you mean Daisy Banks?"

"No, no, sir; no, no. Miss Jessie there at the farm. I can't bear for her to know. There, sir," he exclaimed, hurriedly, "it's got to come out, and I must speak, or I shall never get it said. You see, sir, when I was quite a boy, I was upon my own hands by the death of my father and mother. Then I drifted to Nottingham, where I was thrown amongst the lowest

of the low ; was mixed with poachers, and thieves, and scoundrels of every shape ; always trying to get to something better, but always dragged back to their own level by my companions, who sneered at my efforts, and bullied me till my life was a curse, and I grew to feel more like an old man at eighteen than a boy.

“To make a long story short, sir, I could bear it no longer. I ran away from home—from that,” he said, grimly, “that was my home—and kept away, working honestly for a couple of years, when some of the old lot came across me to jeer me, laugh at me, and end by proposing that I should rob my employer and run off with them. I was seen talking to the wretches, dismissed in disgrace from my situation, and went back to black-guardism and scoundreldom for a whole year, because no one would give me a job of decent labour to do. Mr. Selwood, sir, you don’t know how hard it is to climb the hill where honest people live—to get to be classed as one

who is not always watched with suspicious eyes. It was a fearful fight I had to get there, against no one knows what temptations and efforts to drag me back. Sir, I got to honest work at last, and from that place came on here, where for years I've worked hopefully, and begun to feel that I need not blush when I looked an honest man in the face, nor dread to meet the police lest they should have learned something about my former life. In short, sir, I was beginning to feel that I need not go about always feeling that I had made a mistake in trying to leave my old life."

The vicar sat at the table with his head resting upon his hand, and face averted, feeling that he was not the only man in Dumford whose heart was torn with troubles, and he listened without a word as John Maine went on.

"There, sir, I can't tell you all the hopes and fears I have felt, as I have striven hard for years, hopefully too, thinking that after all

there might be a bright future in store for me, and rest out here at the pleasant old farm ; and now, sir," he continued huskily, and with faltering voice——

"Some of the old lot have turned up and found you again, eh, Maine?"

"Yes, sir, that's what it is," said the young man, starting ; "and I thought I'd make a clean breast of it to you, and ask you, sir, to give me a bit of advice."

"I'm a poor one to ask for advice just now, Maine," said the vicar, sadly ; "but I'll do my best for you."

"Thanky, sir ; I thought you would."

"So you meant to give me some news?" continued the vicar, dryly.

"Yes, sir," said John Maine, "if you call it news," and he spoke bitterly.

"Well, no," said the vicar, making an effort to forget self ; "I don't call it news. I knew all this some time ago."

"You knew it, sir?"

"Why, my good fellow, yes. Some weeks back, about as dirty an old cadger as it has ever been my fate to encounter, pointed you out to me on the road, and told me the greatest part of your history."

"He did, sir?"

"Oh, yes, poor old fellow," said the vicar, bitterly, "I suppose he felt as if he could not die comfortably without doing somebody else an ill turn."

"Die, sir?"

"Yes, he was very ill: could hardly crawl, and I sent him on to Ranby Union, where he died."

"And you knew all this, sir?" faltered John Maine.

"Knew it, Maine? How could I help it? Mr. Keeper Brough, too, made a point of telling me that he had seen you talking to a couple of disreputable-looking scoundrels, evidently trading poachers. Don't you remember what a bad headache it gave you, Maine?"

The young man stared at the speaker, and could not find a word.

"He has been very busy I find, too, at the farm," continued the vicar, forgetting his own troubles in those of his visitor. "Mr. Bultitude does not like it, and he has been in a good deal of trouble about your nocturnal wanderings, friend John Maine."

"I can explain all that, sir," said Maine.

"Of course you can," said the vicar, coolly.

"But you knew of all this, sir?" faltered the young man.

"To be sure I did, John, and respected you for it; but I fear you have been giving poor Jessie a good deal of suffering through your want of openness."

"I'm afraid she thinks ill of me, sir."

"Don't say ill, John Maine. The poor girl is in trouble about you; and I believe has some idea that you and Podmore have been mixed up with the disappearance of Daisy Banks."

"Oh no, sir; no," cried the young man warmly. "You don't think that, sir?"

"Certainly not, Maine," replied the vicar.

"And—Jessie—did Miss Jessie confide this to you, sir?"

"Yes, John Maine. I don't think, under the circumstances, it is any breach of confidence to say she did. People have a habit of confiding their troubles to me—as I have none of my own," he added sadly.

"And you, sir?"

"I told her she was mistaken," remarked the vicar; "but she was not convinced. She could not understand you and Podmore being out together by night. She thought it—girl-like—connected with some dreadful mystery. Master Brough thought it had to do with poaching; and I——"

"Yes, sir," cried Maine eagerly.

"Thought you were out for some good purpose, John Maine; and that if I let the matter rest, the explanation would come all in good time."

“And so it has, sir,” said John; “but you knew all about me, sir.”

“To be sure I did, John Maine; and seeing the life you now lead, respected you for it. It is a hard matter for a man brought up honestly to run a straight course, while for such as you, John Maine,—there, I need only say that you have wonderfully increased the respect I have for you by coming to me with this frank avowal. My letter to you was to give you the opportunity, for your own sake, so as to remove the suspicion that your movements were exciting. There, I am proud to shake hands with a man possessed of such a love of the reputable as to fight the good fight as you have fought it; and of such command over self, as to make the confession you have made to-day.”

He stretched out his hand as he spoke, and John Maine wrung it in his—two strong palms meeting in a hearty grip for a few moments, while neither spoke.

Then John Maine turned away, and stood looking out of the window for a few moments.

"You've made me feel like a great girl, sir," he said at last, huskily.

"I've made you feel like a true man, John Maine," replied the vicar, "one without the false shame of custom about him."

"Thanky, sir, thanky," said the young fellow, recovering himself. "As to that night work, sir," he continued, with a quiet smile, "that's easily explained. I suspected those scoundrels, after seeing them hanging about the vicarage here, of meaning to have some of your silver cups."

"And you watched the place by night, Maine?" said the vicar, eagerly.

"Well, sir, I did," replied the young man, "till Miss Jessie warned me about how my place there at the farm depended on my not going out o' nights, and then I put Tom Podmore on to the job."

"And has he watched ever since?"

“Oh, yes, sir; you may depend on that—every night. Tom’s a trusty fellow, and when he takes to a man he’ll go through fire and water to serve him. He’d do anything for you, sir.”

The vicar said nothing, but his eyes looked a little dim for a few moments, and he drew in a long breath.

“And now, sir, I think I do bring you news,” said Maine.

“Indeed?”

“Yes, sir. If I’m not very much mistook they mean to rob this place to-night.”

“You think so?” said the vicar, with his eyes sparkling; for here was what he had desired—something to call forth his energy, and serve to drown the thoughts that, in spite of his power over self, nearly drove him mad.

“Yes, sir, I think so,” replied Maine, “for they had a good look round the place when they came to the back door, and tried to wheedle Mrs. Slee. Now they’ve been away and made

their plans, and come back. I've seen one of them to-day."

"This is news," said the vicar, musing. "These are the men the police sought to overtake on the day after poor Daisy Banks's disappearance; but if we set the police after them now, we shall scare them away. John Maine, we must catch these night-birds ourselves. Get Tom Podmore to come here."

"I spoke to him before I came in, but he's got something on his mind, and could not come."

"Then we must do it ourselves. You'll help me, Maine?"

"That I will, sir, with all my strength."

"Good; then we can manage this little task without disturbing the police till to-morrow morning; when, if we are lucky, we shall be able to send for them to take charge of our prisoners."

CHAPTER VII.

WHERE JOHN MAINE HAD BEEN.

IT was a very miserable breakfast at the farm the next morning, for old Bultitude was looking very black and angry, and it was quite evident that poor little Jessie had been in tears.

“What time did that scoundrel go out?” said the farmer, stabbing a piece of ham savagely with his fork, and after cutting a piece off as if it were a slice off an enemy, he knocked out the brains of an egg with a heavy dash of his tea-spoon.

“Don’t call him a scoundrel, uncle dear,” sobbed Jessie. “I don’t know.”

“I will, I tell ’ee,” cried the old man furiously. “I won’t hev him hanging about here any longer, a lungeing villain. Leaving his wuck

and going off, and niver coming back all neet. Look thee here, Jess ; if thee thinks any more about that lad, I'll send thee away."

"No, no, uncle dear, don't say that," cried the girl, going up and clinging to him. "He may have been taken ill, or a dozen things may have happened."

"O' coorse. Theer, I niver see such fools as girls are ; the bigger blackguard a man is, the more the women tak's his part. Sit thee down, bairn ; theer, I aint cross wi' you ; I on'y want to do what's best for you, for I wean't see thee wed to a shack."

He kissed poor Jessie affectionately, and bade her "make a good breakfast," but the poor girl could not touch a morsel.

"Hillo ! who's this ?" said the farmer, a few minutes later. "Oh, it's young Brough. Come in, lad, come in."

"Hooray, farmer !" he cried, all eagerness and delight. "I telled you so—I telled you so, and you wouldn't believe it, and Miss Jessie

theer turned like a wood cat, and was ready to scrat my eyes out."

Jessie's colour came and went as her little bosom heaved, and she turned her chair so as to avoid the keeper's gaze.

"What did'st tell me?" said the farmer gruffly.

"Why, that John Maine was out ivery night skulking 'bout the vicarage whiles he should ha' been at home i' bed like an honest man. And I telled ye he was in co. wi' a couple o' poachers and thieves over here fro' one o' the big towns; and I telled you he weer nobbut a tramp hissen."

"How dare you speak of him like that?" cried Jessie, starting up with flashing eyes, and stamping her foot. "You wouldn't dare to speak so to John Maine's face, for fear he should beat you."

"Hoity, toity!" exclaimed the farmer. "Who told thee to speak, lass? Let the man finish."

“I will not sit here and listen to such talk,” cried Jessie, angrily, and with an energy which plainly told her feelings towards the missing man. “Let him wait till John comes.”

“That wean’t niver be,” said the keeper, with a grin of satisfaction. “Because why? Just as I tow’d thee, farmer, there weer a robbery at the vicarage last night.”

“No!” cried old Bultitude, starting up with his mouth full.

“Ay, mun, but there weer,” cried Brough, in an exulting tone. “Just as I said theer’d be, all plotted and planned out to get parson’s silver cups and toots—all plotted and planned out by John Maine and his blackguard mates. Thank your stars, and you too, Miss Jessie, as you haven’t both been robbed and murdered.”

“I wean’t believe it,” cried the old farmer, angrily. “John Maine’s got a bit wrong somehow, but he isn’t the lad to rob nowt. He’s raight to a penny always wi’ his accounts.”

“That’s his artfulness,” sneered Brough.

“Yah!” cried the farmer. “You’ve got hold of a cock and bull story up town, wheer they’ll turn a slip on the causay into fower fatal accidents ’fore the news has got from the top of the High Street to the bottom.”

As he spoke Jessie crossed over to her uncle, laid her hands upon his shoulder, and stood with her eyes flashing indignant protest against the accuser of her lover.

“Hev it your own waya,” said Brough, quietly. “I were up at ’station, when parson comes in hissen, and tell’d Bowley that the party on ’em broke in at the vicarage last night, ’bout half-past twelve, and that he’d fote the men, and got ’em locked up, and John Maine wi’ ’em. Them’s parson’s own words; and if parson’s words arn’t true, dal it all, who’s is?”

“I’ll never, never believe it,” cried Jessie, with an angry burst of indignation; and then, bursting into tears, she ran out of the room, sobbing bitterly.

“Poor little lass!” said old Bultitude, softly; “she thinks a deal more o’ John Maine than she does o’ thee, my lad. But look here: I believe i’ John Maine after all, and shall go on believing in him, though I am a bit popped agen him, till I sees him foun’ guilty. Yow set me watching the lad one night, you know, Brough, and it all turned out a bam, for there he weer, safe in his bed. Just you let things bide till we know more ’bout ’em; and I don’t thank ye, young man, for coming and spoiling my brackfast.”

“Just as yow like, Master Bultitude,” said the keeper, sourly; “but just answer me one question, Weer John Maine at home all last night?”

“No,” said the farmer, savagely, “and he aint been back yet; but that don’t prove he weer lungeing ’bout parson’s. How do I know he wasn’t at Bosthorpe Dancing?”

“Bostrop Dancing weer day afore yesterday,” said the keeper, grinning as he made this

retort about the village feast. "Oh, here comes parson."

"Morning, Mr. Bultitude," said the vicar, coming in, looking rather grave. "Ah, Miss Jessie, how are you?" he continued, as, on hearing his voice, the girl stole back into the room. "Nice neighbours you are, to lie snug in bed and let your poor vicar be robbed, and murdered, and carried off in a cart."

Jessie sank into a chair, looking as white as ashes, while Brough rubbed his hands joyously.

"Then it is all true?" said the farmer slowly.

"True? Oh, yes, true enough," said the vicar. "I got the scoundrels safely locked up in the cellar."

"Howd up, my lass, howd up," whispered the farmer, kindly, as he laid his hand on Jessie's shoulder; "be a woman and let's hear the worst." Then to the vicar: "An' was John Maine wi' 'em, sir?"

"Oh yes, he was with them," said the vicar, wondering.

"Theer, I telled you so," cried Brough exultantly, "I know'd how he'd turn out."

The vicar smiled slightly at this, as he noticed the malice of the man, and he repeated slowly—

"Yes, John Maine was there."

The last trace of colour faded out of Jessie's cheeks, and a dull look of stony despair came over her countenance, while the old farmer shifted his position and began to dig a fork savagely into the deal table.

"Dal me—" began the old man, but he stopped short.

"Just as I telled thee," said Brough, eagerly.

"Dal thee! don't set thee clapper going at me," roared the old man. "I know it, don't I?"

"Yes," said the vicar, smiling, as he took and patted Jessie's hand; "John Maine was there, and a braver ally I never had."

"What?" roared the farmer.

"After watching my house, and setting young Podmore to watch it," said the vicar, "he came and warned me about his suspicions, and——"

"Dal me!" cried old Bultitude, "you kep' him there all night, parson, to help you?"

"I did," said the vicar.

"And took the rascals?"

"Yes, with John Maine's help."

"It's a-maazing," said the old man, slapping his thigh, and bursting into a tremendous series of chuckles. "Oh, parson, you are a one-er, and no mistake."

The vicar was conscious of two looks as Jessie ran from the room—one of black indignation, directed at Brough; the other a soft, tender glance of thankfulness at himself, ere the poor girl once more ran up into her own room to "have a good cry."

"Let me see," said old Bultitude, dryly; "I don't think theer was owt else as you

wanted to tell me, was theer, Master Brough?"

"Not as I knows on, farmer," said the keeper, looking from one to the other.

"Because, being churchwarden, theer's a thing or two I want to talk ower wi' parson—calling a meeting for next week, like."

"Oh, I can go," said the keeper, in an offended tone—"I can go if it comes to that;" and then, as no one paid any attention to him, he strode out, his departure being made plain by a loud yelping noise outside, and the voice of one of the labourers being heard to exclaim—

"I shouldn't ha' thowt yow'd kick a dog like that, Master Brough."

While the vicar sat down and told the adventures of the past night.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BUSY NIGHT.

As soon as John Maine had promised to stay with him, the vicar sat down, and seemed for a few minutes to be thinking.

"I should like," he said at last, "to have a regular good stand-up fight with these scoundrels if they come; but I'm a man of peace now, Maine, and must act accordingly."

"I'll do the fighting, sir," said Maine, excitedly.

"No, that will not do either, my man. We must have no fighting. We must bring the wisdom of the serpent to bear. You must not stir from here, or we shall alarm the enemy. They may have seen you come, but that's doubtful; but if I let you go and come back

again, the chances are that they may have scouts out, and then they must see you. Let the farm people fidget about you for one night. Old Bultitude will get in a rage, and Miss Jessie will cast you off; but I'll go and smooth all that to-morrow. Mrs. Slee will go home, and we'll send the girl to bed as usual. If I keep you out of sight, she will think you are gone. By the way, who's that?"

He slipped behind one of the window curtains, and watched as a decrepit old man, carrying some laces and kettle-holders for sale in one hand, a few tracts in the other, came slowly up the garden path, to stand as if hesitating which way to go; but glancing keenly from window to door, making observations that would not have been noticed at any other time, before slinking painfully round to the back of the house, where Mrs. Slee's sharp voice was soon after heard, and the old man came back at last with a good-sized piece of bread and meat.

"You old rascal!" said the vicar, as he shook his fist at the departing figure. "That scoundrel, Maine, not only tries to rob the rich, but through his trickery he indirectly steals from the poor by hardening the hearts of the charitable. There's no doubt about what you say, John Maine; that fellow's a spy from the enemy's camp—the siege has commenced."

The time flew by: evening came, and at last the hour for prayers. All had seemed quiet in the town, and at last the vicar rang, and Mrs. Slee and the maid came in.

"You'll stay to prayers, Maine?" said the vicar, quietly; and the young man knelt with the rest, while in a low, calm voice, the evening supplications for protection and thanks for the past were offered up—as quietly as if nothing was expected to shortly occur and quicken the pulses.

"Good night, Mrs. Slee," said the vicar; then, "I'll see to the front door myself."

Then the fastening of shutters was heard,

followed by the closing of the back door, and its fastening, Mrs. Slee's steps sounding plainly on the gravel path, as she went to her cottage. Lastly, the maid was heard upon the stairs, and her door closed.

At the same time John Maine followed the vicar into the hall, the latter talking to him loudly for a few minutes, and then the front door was noisily opened and shut.

"The girl will think you have gone now," said the vicar; "so come into the study, and pull off those heavy boots."

The vicar set the example, placing his afterwards at the foot of the stairs in the hall, and hiding those of John Maine in an out-of-the-way cupboard.

"Now then, we'll have these two in case of accident," he said, detaching a couple of Australian waddies from the wall; "but I don't think we shall want them. I'll prepare for the rascals in the study, for that's where they will break in, and we must not be long

before my light goes up to my room. They know all my habits by this time, I'll be bound."

There was a neat, bright little copper kettle on the hob in the study, and on returning, the vicar unlocked his cabinet, placed a cut lemon on the table, and a sugar-glass, a knife with which he cut some slices of lemon, placing one in a tumbler, pouring in a little water, and macerating the slice after it had been well stirred. Then by the side he placed a half-smoked cigar and an ashpan, sprinkled some of the ash upon the cloth, and finished all off with the presence of a quaint little silver-tipped bottle labelled "Gin."

"They'll give me the credit of having been enjoying myself to-night, Maine," said the vicar, smiling, as he held the bottle up to the light, took out the silver-mounted cork, and from one side of the cabinet, amongst a row of medicine phials, he took a small blue flask, removed the stopper, measured a certain

quantity in a graduated glass, and poured the clear pleasant-smelling fluid into the gin.

“I see now, sir,” said Maine, who had been puzzled at the vicar’s movements, as he recorked the spirit-bottle, and placed back the glass and tiny flask—movements which seemed indicative of arrangements for passing a comfortable night.

“To be sure,” said the vicar. “Let them only sit down to a glass apiece of that—as they certainly will, for the rogues can’t pass drink—and all we shall have to do will be to bundle them neck and crop down into the cellar to sleep it off, ready for the attendance of the police in the morning. There will be four in the gang—three to come here, and a fourth to wait somewhere handy with a horse and cart. It will only be a glass apiece.”

“What makes you think that they will break in here, sir?” asked John Maine.

“Because there are no iron bars to the

window, and no one sleeps overhead. Now, then, all's ready, so we'll go upstairs."

"But won't you stay and stop them from getting in, sir?"

"Certainly not, Maine. Let them walk into the trap, and we will keep awake as well as we can in the dark."

Lighting a chamber candle, the vicar turned out the lamps, and led the way to his bedroom, where, after placing an easy chair for his companion, he apparently busied himself for a quarter of an hour in undressing, taking care to cast his shadow several times upon the window-blind, then placing matches ready, and the door open, he extinguished the light.

"Half-past ten, Maine," he whispered. "Now for a long watch. Can you keep awake?"

"I think so, sir," was the reply.

"Good; then listen attentively, and warn me of the slightest sound, but no word must be spoken above a whisper. No conversation."

One hour in the solemn silence of the night, and no sound was heard. Once the vicar stretched out his hand to have it pressed in reply by way of showing that his companion was on the alert.

Another hour passed, and all was perfectly still. The vicar had had no difficulty in keeping awake, for his thoughts were upon the scene that had taken place up at the House ; and though he strove to drive away the remembrance, and to nerve himself for the struggle that must be his for weeks to come, there was Eve Pelly's sweet gentle face before him, seeming to ask him wistfully to accede to her wish.

At last John Maine, believing him to be asleep, touched his arm.

"Yes," was the whispered answer. "I heard them five minutes ago. There they are."

At that moment a singular low grating noise was heard.

"Diamond cutting glass," said the vicar, with his lips close to his companion's ear.

A sharp crack.

"There goes the pane," whispered the vicar.

Then there was the creak—creak—creak of a window being softly raised, after the fastening had been thrust back. Then, again, perfect silence, succeeded at last by a gentle rustling noise; but so quietly had the entry been made that but for a faint glimmer of light seen now and then through the open door, there was nothing to indicate that anything below was wrong.

The watchers sat listening with their hearts beating with a heavy dull pulsation, till at length a stair creaked, as if from the weight of some one ascending, and they fancied they could hear the hard breathing of some listener. This ceased in a very short time, and they instinctively knew that the burglar had returned to the study, where the clink of a glass warned them that the bait had proved sufficient attraction for the wolves.

There was another pause and a faint whisper

or two, followed by the soft rustling made by the men crossing the little hall to the dining-room, from whence arose the metallic sound of silver touching silver. Then there came more rustling and chinking, and John Maine whispered,

“Pray, let’s go and stop them, sir : they’ll get away with the plate.”

“Oh, no,” said the vicar in the same tone. “Wait.”

They waited, and the rustling made by the men crossing the hall back to the study was again heard, and then, for some little time, there was silence.

“They must be gone, sir,” whispered Maine, but almost as he spoke there came up from below a dull, heavy, stertorous snore, which was soon after accompanied by the heavy hard breathing of a sleeper, and an occasional snort and muttering, as of some one talking in his slumber.

“I think we may strike a light now, Maine,”

said the vicar, quietly ; and as he did so, and lit the chamber-candle, John Maine moistened his hand to take a good grip of his waddy.

“Oh, we shan't need that,” said the vicar, smiling. “Come along.”

He led the way downstairs to the study, where, on looking in, there lay one man extended upon the hearth-rug ; another was on the couch ; and the third slept heavily in the easy chair, with his head hanging over the arm, his uneasy position causing him to utter the snorts and mutterings that had ascended the stairs.

It was only a matter of ten minutes or so for the watchers to drag their prisoners down to the little cellar, where some straw was placed beneath their heads to save them from suffocation. Then the great key was turned, and the vicar and his companion returned to the study.

“Now for number four, John Maine,” said the vicar. “Come along.”

He resumed his boots, and John Maine was following his example when a low chirp was uttered, and a head appeared at the window.

John Maine was nearest, and he made a dash at the owner; but with a rush he disappeared, and before the garden-gate could be reached wheels and the sound of a horse galloping came to the pursuers' ears.

"He has gone, John Maine," said the vicar, coolly. "Never mind, the police may come across him. We have to go back and watch our prisoners."

They re-entered the house, to find that the servant girl had not been alarmed, and taking it in turns to lie down on the couch, the vicar and John Maine kept watch and ward till morning, when, awaking in a fearful state of alarm, the scoundrels began to try the door, and at last appealed pitifully for mercy, as the vicar was replacing in order the cups and pieces of plate arranged ready for conveyance to the cart.

Soon after he walked up to the station, and afterwards made his way to the farm, to set them at rest about John Maine, with the result that has been seen.

CHAPTER IX.

A MYSTERIOUS WARNING.

THE day following that on which the scoundrels who had made the attempt on the vicarage had been sent off to the county town, the vicar was in his garden musing on his future, and thinking whether it was his duty to leave Dumford and go far away, as life there had become a torture; but everything seemed to tend towards the point that it was his duty to stay and forget self in trying to aid others. In spite of the past, it seemed to him that he had done good; Richard Glaire had listened to reason; the strike was nearly over, and the men had settled down into a calmer state of resignation to their fate. So quiet were they that he more than suspected

that they had some inkling of the change coming on. Then, too, he had made peace at the farm, where the wedding of John Maine and Jessie was shortly to take place, John, at his instigation, having frankly told the farmer the whole of his past life, to be greeted with a tremendous clap on the shoulder and called "a silly sheep."

"Just as if thou could'st help that, lad," said the old man. "Why didstn't out wi' it at first?"

And then Eve's wedding.

"Poor girl! she wishes it," the vicar said to himself, continuing his musing, as he stooped to tie up a flower here and there. "It would be madness to interpose, and God help her, she will redeem him, and — I hope so — I hope so."

"Well, I must stay," he said, with a weary smile upon his face. "I am a priest, and the priests of old looked upon self-denial as a duty. Let it be mine to try and perfect the

peace that is coming back to this strange old place."

"Paarson !"

He started and looked round, but no one was visible, and yet a deep rough voice he seemed to know had spoken.

"Paarson !" was repeated, apparently close to his feet where he was standing by the garden hedge.

"Who is it ?"

"Niver mind who it is," said the voice. "I joost want a word wi' you."

"Where are you ?"

"Lying down here i' th' dyke. I had to creep here 'mong the nattles like a big snail."

"Well, come out, man, and speak to me."

"Nay, nay, that wean't do."

"What, is it you, Harry ?"

"Howd your tongue, wilt ta, paarson. I don't want the lads to know as I comed and telled you. I've come along fower dykes."

"What does it all mean ?" said the vicar,

leaning over the hedge, to see the great hammer-man lying on his face in the ditch on the field side.

"Don't ask no questions, paarson, for I wean't tell nowt, 'cause I'm sweered not to; but I don't like what's going on."

"Well, but tell me, Harry, I beg—I insist——"

"I wean't tell thee nowt, paarson, on'y this here. Yow wouldn't like them as you knows hurt, so joost tell Dicky Glaire to look out."

"But why—when? I must know more."

The only answer was a loud rustling, and the great body of the hammer-man could be seen crawling through the nettles as he made his way pretty quickly along in the opposite direction to that in which he had come, and the vicar forbore to pursue, as it might have tended to betray him.

"I'm not without friends, after all," he said, musing. "Then this quietness is only the precursor of some other storm. I'll go up at once."

He made his way straight to the House, and all was very quiet in the town. Men were lounging about, and their thin sad-faced wives were to be seen here and there busy within, but no sign was visible of the coming storm ; and for a while the vicar was ready to doubt the possibility of anything threatening, till he recalled Big Harry's action, and felt certain that the man's words must be true. Any doubt he might have had was, however, dispelled a moment or two later, for he saw Tom Podmore coming towards him ; but as soon as the young man caught sight of the vicar he turned sharply round and went away.

“There is something wrong, and he's mixed up in it,” muttered the vicar. “Of course, he is Big Harry's friend, and so the great fellow knew it. Perhaps, though, he sent him to caution me !”

It was a random shot, but it hit the mark, for Tom, being held in suspicion by his fellows, could not well stir in the matter ; and in

talking it over with Big Harry, the latter had declared he would warn parson, and so he had.

The vicar was shown in directly, and found the family at the House seated together. He was rather shocked to see Eve's pallid face ; but she brightened up at his coming, and seemed to him to be trying to show him how happy they once more were.

Mrs. Glaire, too, looked pale and careworn, but she was eager in her ways, and glad to see him, while Richard, in a half-civil way, but with a shifty look in his eye, shook hands and muttered something about the weather.

"Here, Eve, we'll go down the garden together," said Richard ; "Mr. Selwood's come to see my mother."

"No," said the vicar, quietly, "I have come to see you."

"To see me ?"

"Yes ; on very important business."

"If you've come from those scoundrels,"

said Richard, hotly, "I won't hear a word. Let them come themselves."

"Richard!" said Mrs. Glaire, imploringly.

"I don't care, mother. I've given way to a certain extent, and I'll go no further."

"But I have not come from the men," said the vicar.

"Then what is it?" said Richard, who had a horror of being left alone with his visitor. "Speak out."

"I would rather tell you in private," said the vicar, glancing uneasily at the two women.

"If it is any fresh trouble, Mr. Selwood, pray speak out," said Mrs. Glaire, anxiously.

"But Miss Pelly?"

"Richard is to be my husband in a few days, Mr. Selwood," said Eve, smiling sadly, as she rose and stood beside him, with her hands resting on his shoulder. "If it is trouble, I have a right to share it with him."

"There, let's have it," said Richard, rudely. "They will have to hear whatever it is."

The vicar hesitated a moment or two, and tried to collect himself, for Eve's last words sent a pang through his breast, as they seemed to tear the last fibre that had held her to him.

At last he spoke.

"I have little to tell. My news is shadowy and undefined, but I fear it is very real."

"Well, tell me, man, tell me," said Richard ; who, while assuming an air of bravado, began to look white.

"I will, Mr. Glaire. One of your workmen came secretly to me within the last half-hour to bid you be on your guard."

"I haven't been off," said Richard, insolently. "Who was it?"

"That I cannot tell you," said the vicar. "The man said he had been sworn to secrecy, but he did not like the business, and came at all risks to tell me."

"It was that scoundrel, Tom Podmore," cried Richard.

"It was not Podmore," replied the vicar.

"Then it was that old villain, Joe Banks—an old hypocrite. Forced his way down the garden to me the other evening to bully me."

"Richard, my boy, for heaven's sake," cried Mrs. Glaire.

"It was not your old foreman, Mr. Glaire," said the vicar, quietly. "I have told you all. It is very little, but it may mean much. If you will take my advice you will counteract the people's plans by opening your works to-morrow."

"Yes, Richard, do!" exclaimed Mrs. Glaire and Eve in a breath.

"I said I'd open them on a certain day, and I won't stir a peg from that decision," cried Richard, obstinately.

"Whom the gods will destroy, they first make mad," muttered the vicar to himself, in the old Latin.

"It would be giving way to them," said Richard, "and that I'll never do."

"But you give way when you do open," said the vicar.

"I'm not going to argue that," said Richard, haughtily; "I've made up my mind, and I shall keep to it."

"Then leave your orders, and go quietly away for a few days, till the works are in full swing again."

Richard had made up his mind to do that very thing; but, as the vicar proposed it, and Eve eagerly acquiesced, he was dead against it on the instant.

"I shall stay here," he said firmly, "and have the police to guard the house."

"It is like inviting attack," said the vicar, excitedly. "For your mother's and Miss Pelly's sake, don't do that. It is throwing down the gauntlet to a set of men maddened by a belief in their wrongs. Many of them are fierce with hunger."

"Bah! Stuff!" said Richard; "they've got plenty saved up, and — he, he, he! — nicely

they've humbugged you into relieving them with soup and bread and meat. You don't know Dumford yet, Mr. Selwood."

"If I am to know it as you know it," thought the vicar, "I hope I never shall;" but he did not give utterance to his thoughts.

"I shall go——" began Richard; then, insolently—"You won't go and betray me, parson, will you?"

The vicar did not reply.

"I shall go and stay over at the works, mother," said Richard.

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Glaire.

"Stay over at the works till the opening day. Let the brutes think I have left the town; and, with a few blankets and some provisions, I shall do. I'll go over to-night."

"But, Richard, this is folly," cried Eve, beginning to tremble.

"You don't know anything about it," he said, sharply. "If the beasts mean mischief again, they'll try to get me away from here,

and most likely they are watching every train to catch me. If I slip over in the middle of the night, I shall be safe ; for no one will think I am there. What do you say, parson ?”

The vicar sat thinking for a few moments, and then gave in his acquiescence to the plan.

“ But you must keep strictly in hiding,” he said.

“ Well, it won't be for long,” replied Richard ;
“ and won't be more dull than being in here.”

Eve winced a little, but she turned and tried to smile.

“ But would it be wise, Mr. Selwood ?” exclaimed Mrs. Glaire, eagerly.

“ Yes ; I think it would,” said the vicar, “ if he can get there unseen. If these misguided men do search for him, that is one of the last places they will go to, I feel sure. But will you keep closely in hiding ? Would it not be better to give way at once ?” he continued, addressing Richard.

“ I have said what I mean to do,” said

Richard, sharply; "and what I say I keep to."

The vicar bowed his head, and lent himself as much as was likely to be acceptable to the scheme; ending by saying, with a smile on his face—

"I hope, Miss Pelly, that this is the last of these unpleasant affairs we shall ever have here; for rest assured I shall lose no time in trying to bring the people to a better way of thinking."

He rose and left them, it being thoroughly understood that Richard was to go into hiding that very night, while the vicar would communicate with the police, to ensure some protection for the house; though all felt it to be needless, as any attack was certain to be made on Richard personally.

As he reached the door, though, the vicar turned to Richard—

"Shall I come and be your companion every night? I will come. I can sleep on a bare

board with any fellow, and," he added, smiling, "I enjoy a pipe."

Richard jumped eagerly at the idea, and was about to say yes, but the evil part of his nature prevailed.

"No," he said rudely; "when I want Mr. Selwood's help I will ask for it."

"As you will, Mr. Glaire," was the reply; "and I hope you will. Good-bye, Mrs. Glaire—Miss Pelly, and I sincerely hope this will prove a false alarm."

"If that fellow thinks he's coming to my place after the marriage, he's grievously mistaken," said Richard to himself, and the door closed.

Meanwhile the vicar called at the station, and after a few words about the burglary and the forthcoming examination—

"By the way, Smith," he said to the constable, "will you and your man oblige me by keeping a strict watch over the House—Mr. Glaire's—for the next week? I have my reasons."

“Certainly, sir,” was the reply; “and, by the way, sir, my missus’s duty to you for the port wine: it’s doing her a sight o’ good.”

“Glad of it, Smith; send down for some more when that’s done.”

“He’s a good sort,” muttered the policeman, “that he is; but he ought to have sent up for me the other night.”

The vicar strolled back towards the bottom of the town, and turning off, was making his way towards the foreman’s cottage, when he came upon Big Harry with a stick and a bundle, going across the field - cut to the station.

The great fellow tried to get away, but the vicar hailed him, and he stopped.

“Now, don’t thee ask queshtuns, paarson,” he exclaimed; “I tell’d ye I’m sweered, and can’t say owt.”

“I will not ask you anything, Harry,” said the vicar; “only thank you, as I do, for your hint. But where are you going?”

"Sheffle first, Birming after. I'm sick o' this."

"Going to get work?"

"Yes, paarson."

"Why not stop another week?"

"No," said the big fellow; "I wean't stay another day. I'm off."

"You've got some other reason for going?"

"Paarson, I wean't tell'ee owt," said the big fellow; "theer."

"Good-bye, Harry," said the vicar, smiling, and holding out his hand. "I hope I shall see you back again, soon."

"That you will, paarson, soon as iver they've done striking; as for me, I'm longing to get howd of a hammer again. Good-bye."

"I should like to know more," said the vicar, as he saw the great fellow go striding away. "There's some atrocious plan on hand, and he's too honest to stop and join in it, while he's too true to his friends to betray them. There's some fine stuff here in Dumford; but, alas! it is very, very rough."

His walk to the cottage was in vain. "My master" was out, so Mrs. Banks, who looked very sad and mournful, declared.

"He's out wandering about a deal, sir, now. But hev you had word o' my poor bairn?"

"I am very sorry to say no, Mrs. Banks," said the vicar, kindly; and he left soon after, to be tortured by the feeling that he would be doing wrong in marrying Richard Glaire and his cousin, for he still suspected him of knowing Daisy's whereabouts, and could get no nearer to his confidence now than on the first day they met.

He inadvertently strolled to the spot where they had first encountered, and stood leaning against the stile, thinking of all that had since passed, wondering the while whether he might not have done better amongst these people if he had been the quiet, reserved, staid clergyman of the usual type—scholarly, refined, and not too willing to make himself at home.

"It is a hard question to answer," he said at

last, as he turned to go home, listening to the ringing song of the lark far up in the blue sky, unstained by the smoke of the great furnace and the towering shaft; "it is a hard question to answer, and I can only say—God knows."

CHAPTER X.

A REVELATION.

It was the day of the plot concocted by Sim's Brotherhood, the members of which body had been perfectly quiet, holding no meeting, and avoiding one another as they brooded over their wrongs, and in their roused state of mind rejoiced at the idea of their cunning revenge.

Had the vicar been ignorant of coming danger he would have suspected it, for men who had been in the habit of frankly returning his salutations or stopping to chat, now refused to meet his eye, or avoided him by crossing the road.

He shuddered as he thought of what might be done, but as the last day had come, he was in hopes that it might pass over safely, for Richard had kept closely to his hiding-place,

and the rumour had got abroad that he had left the town.

He bore this good news to the House.

“Let him only keep to his hiding-place to-night, Mrs. Glaire,” he said; “and to-morrow give out the announcement that the works are opened, and the men once met, we shall have tided over our trouble.”

“Yes, *our* trouble,” said Mrs. Glaire, pressing his hand. “Mr. Selwood, I repent of not taking you more into my confidence.”

“I am glad you have made so great a friend of me as you have,” was the reply; and he rose to go.

“You will stop and see Eve,” said Mrs. Glaire.

“No,” he said, sadly; “not now. Good-bye, good-bye.”

“I’ve done him grievous wrong,” exclaimed Mrs. Glaire, wringing her hands as soon as she was alone; “but it was fate—fate. I must save my poor wilful wandering boy.”

The vicar prayed for that day and night to hasten on, that his poor people might be met, ere they assembled for any ill design, by the news of Richard Glaire's yielding to them, and the opening of the works ; but night seemed as if it would never come. He could not rest ; the dread of impending evil was so strong upon him, and he was going about from house to house all day, and called several times at the police-station.

His mind was in a whirl, and yet the town had never seemed more quiet nor fewer people about. The works, with their dull windows and blank closed doors, looked chill and bare ; and as he passed he scanned the place, and wondered whereabouts Richard could be hidden. Then he began to think of the coming marriage, and his heart grew heavier still ; and at last, after endless calls, he went to the vicarage, and threw himself into a chair, to find Mrs. Slee quite excited about him.

“ Thee's hardly had bite or soop to-day, sir,”

she cried. "Yow'll be ill;" and in spite of his remonstrances, she brought him in the dinner that had been waiting for hours, and insisted upon his eating it.

He partook of it more for the sake of gaining strength than from appetite, and then made up his mind to go up the town, and watch the night through; for it was now dark.

It was about eight o'clock that a woman in a cloak, and wearing a thick veil, entered the town, followed by a great burly man, and going straight up to the House, rang and asked to see Mrs. Glaire.

"I don't think you can see her, she's out," said the girl, looking at the visitor suspiciously, the man having stopped back; but as she was closing the door, it was pushed open, and Tom Podmore almost forced his way in.

The girl was about to scream, but, on recognising him, she stared wonderingly.

"Let me speak to her for a moment, Jane Marks," he said. "Shoot the door."

"No, no; I can't. I shall get into trouble," said the girl.

"I've come to save you fro' trouble," said Tom. "Do as I tell you, quick. This is no time for stopping, when at any moment a mob of savage workmen may be ready to tear down the place."

He pointed to the veiled figure as he spoke, and the girl drew back, while the strange visitor shrank to the wall. But only for a moment; the next she uttered a sob, and holding out her hands, she cried—

"Oh, Tom, Tom; did you know me?"

"Know you," he said bitterly; "yes, I'd tell thee anywheers."

"Wean't you tak' my hands?" she cried.

"Niver again, lass, niver again."

"Is this the way you meet me, then, Tom?"

"Ay, lass. How would'st thou hev me meet thee? Why hev you comed here?"

"Oh, Tom, I was i' Sheffle, and I met Big

Harry. He told me such dreadful things about father."

"I wonder he didn't tell thee the old man weer dead."

"Oh, Tom, if you knew all," cried the girl.

"Ay, lass, I know enew."

"Tom, you don't—you can't know. But there, I can't stay. It's so dreadful. Let me go by."

"No, Daisy," said the young man passionately. "You can't go by. I believe I hate thee now, but I can't leave thee. You must go wi' me."

"Go with you—where?" cried the girl.

"To your own home, where your poor broken-hearted mother's waiting for thee."

"Oh, I shall go mad," exclaimed Daisy. "Tell me. Where is Mrs. Glaire? Where is Mr. Richard?"

"You weak, silly girl," said Tom, catching her arm. "I knew it was so, though they said strange things about thee. Oh, Daisy,"

he said, piteously, as he sought to stay her, "leave him. Go home. Don't for thee own sake stop this how. You threw away my poor, rough love, and I've tow'd my sen ower and ower again that I hated thee, but I don't, Daisy. I'm only sorry for thee, I can't forget the past."

He turned aside to hide the workings of his face.

"How dare you speak to me like this?" cried Daisy. "You don't know me, Tom, or you would not. I'll go, I will not be so insulted, and by one who pretended so much." Then, moved by the young fellow's grief, she laid her hand upon his arm. "Tom," she said, softly, "you'll be sorry for this when you know all."

"Don't touch me," cried Tom, passionately, as he shook her off. "I can't bide it, Daisy. I loved you once, but you threw me over for that bit of a butterfly of a thing."

"Oh, this is too much, and at such a time,"

cried Daisy. "Here, Jane, Jane. Let me go by."

"No," said Tom, catching her wrist, as she made for the interior of the house. "You shall not go to join him again. I'll tak' thee home to thy father."

"Not yet, Tom, not yet. I'm not going to him. Here, Jane, Jane, quick. Where is Mr. Richard?" she cried, as the maid came back.

"Dal thee!" cried Tom, as he threw her arm savagely away. "This before me!"

The girl looked at her and shook her head.

"Where is Mrs. Glaire or Miss Pelly?"

"Out," said the girl, "at Mr. Purley's."

"And Mr. Richard?" cried Daisy imploringly. "Quick: it is for his good," while Tom, who heard her words, stood gnawing his lips with jealous rage.

"I don't know," said the girl. "He's gone away."

"Oh, this is dreadful," said Daisy, looking bewildered. "Tom, will you not help me? I

have been home, and cannot find father or mother. I come here and I cannot find Mr. Richard."

"Howd your tongue, lass, or you'll make me mad," cried Tom. "But Daisy, my bairn, listen," he cried, softening down. "You know I loved you. Come wi' me, and I'll find you a home somewheers. You shall never see me again, but I shall know that I've saved you from him."

"Tom, where is my father?" cried Daisy, indignantly.

"Listen to me, Daisy, 'fore it is too late," pleaded the young man. "Let me tak' you away."

"Will you tell me where my poor father is?" cried Daisy again. "If you can't believe in me, I will listen to this shameful talk no more."

"Shameful talk!" said Tom, bitterly.

"Where is my father?"

"Drove mad by his child," cried Tom,

speaking now in tones of sorrow. "Gone by this time wi' a lot more to blow up the wucks."

"I won't believe it yet," cried Daisy. "It can't be true. My dear father would never do the like."

"It's true enew," said Tom, "and I should ha' been theer trying once more to stop him, only I see you, and, like a fool, tried to save thee again."

"Tom," cried Daisy, who was giddy with dread and excitement, "tell me that this is some terrible mistake."

"Yes," he said, bitterly; "and I made it."

"What shall I do?" gasped Daisy. "Oh, at last, Mrs. Glaire—Mrs. Glaire, what have you done?"

"You here!" cried Mrs. Glaire, who now entered with Eve from the doctor's, the latter turning pale, and sinking into a chair.

"Yes, yes," gasped Daisy, sinking on her knees, and clinging to Mrs. Glaire's skirts; "I

came—I was obliged to come back. My father, my——Oh no, no, no, no!” she sobbed to herself, “I dare not tell them; I must not tell. I—I—I came——”

“Yes,” cried Mrs. Glaire, angrily; “you came, false, cruel girl. You came back to ruin all our hopes of happiness here—to undo all which I have striven so hard to do.”

“But, Mrs. Glaire, dear Mrs. Glaire, I have tried so hard,” sobbed Daisy, grovelling on the floor, but still clinging to Mrs. Glaire’s dress that she tried to drag away. “You don’t know what I’ve suffered away in that cold, bitter town, wi’out a word from home, wi’out knowing what they thowt o’ me, for I kep’ my word. I never wrote once, though I was breaking my heart to write.”

“But you came back—and now”——cried Mrs. Glaire.

“Yes, yes, I heard—danger—so horrible, I was obliged,” panted the girl.

“You heard that?” said Mrs. Glaire.

"Yes, yes," cried Daisy; "and I came to try and save him fro' it."

"Of course," cried Mrs. Glaire. "Where is your promise?"

"Aunt, aunt," sobbed Eve, "she is fainting. Pray spare her."

"Spare her!" cried Mrs. Glaire. "Why should I? Has she spared us? Go, girl, go; your presence pollutes this place."

"No, no," cried Daisy. "You mistake me—indeed you do, Mrs. Glaire. I did not come back for what you think."

"Then why did you come?"

"I cannot—dare not tell you; but where, where is Mr. Richard?"

Tom Podmore turned aside, and moved towards the door.

"How dare you ask me," cried Mrs. Glaire, "after the promise you made?"

"Don't ask me that," wailed Daisy, struggling to her feet, and wringing her hands wildly. "I can't find father. I must see Mr. Richard."

Harry said he hadn't left the town. Is he here?"

"No, girl," said Mrs. Glaire, turning away, "he is not here."

"Where is he, then? Oh, Mrs. Glaire!" cried the girl, "for your own sake tell me. On my knees I beg of you to tell me. It is life and death. I came to save. Miss Eve!" she cried, turning on her knees to her. "You love him; tell me where he is. I know—yes, I know," she cried, eagerly; "he must be at the works."

Eve started and turned away her head, to bury her face in her hands.

"Yes," cried Daisy, excitedly. "He must be there."

She turned hurriedly to go, when Tom Podmore caught at her cloak.

"Stop!" he cried excitedly. "You cannot go there."

Daisy turned upon him angrily, and tore off her cloak, leaving it in his hands as she dashed

off through the dark with the young man in pursuit.

“Undone!” moaned Mrs. Glaire. “Undone. Oh, Eve, my poor stricken darling, and after all I have tried!”

“But, aunt, he will not see her. Richard will not—”

“A false, treacherous girl!” moaned Mrs. Glaire. “Eve, my darling, for your sake, for her sake—thank Heaven, here is Dick! Oh, my boy, my darling!”

She threw her arms round him exultingly, as if to hold him, and save him from danger, whilst he threw off the heavy coat in which he was muffled.

“Phew! I’m nearly suffocated,” he cried. “There, that will do, mother. Ah! Eve.”

“But why did you leave the works, my boy?” cried Mrs. Glaire.

“Sick of it,” cried Richard, hastily. “I’ll stay there no more. I’ll open to-morrow. Curse the place, it’s horrible of a night, and I’ve

finished all the wine. 'What's the matter with Eve?'

"But," cried Mrs. Glaire, evading the question, and speaking excitedly, "you must not stay, Richard; you must leave again to-night—now, at once."

"Where for?" said Richard, grimly.

"London—France—anywhere," exclaimed Mrs. Glaire, piteously.

"Nova Scotia, or the North Pole," said Richard, savagely. "D—n it, mother, I won't hide from the curs any more. Here have I been for days in that wretched hole."

"But there's mischief brewing, Dick, my boy, I am sure there is. You must leave at once."

"Let it brew," he cried. "But who was that left the house as I came in?"

Mrs. Glaire did not answer, only looked appealingly to Eve.

"I said who was that came out of the house as I came along—some woman?"

Still there was no answer, and the young man looked eagerly round the hall, to take a step aside, and pounced upon a handkerchief that had been dropped on the mat.

"Whose is this?" he cried, taking it to the light, and holding it out, first to inspect one corner and then another. "Daisy!" he cried, joyously. "Has Daisy been here? Do you hear? Speak, some of you. It was; it must have been. I might have known her in the dark."

"You coward—you villain!" cried Mrs. Glaire, in a low, hissing whisper. "Is there to be no end to your deceit? Stop. One moment. Let me tell you what I know. You planned to meet that girl to-night, and you left your hiding-place on purpose."

"Then it was Daisy!" cried Richard.

"Yes, it was Daisy. You were a little too late. You must have good spies, Richard, my son, clever people, to keep you informed, and you learned that your poor cheated cousin and I were gone out for the evening."

“What the deuce do you mean?” cried Richard, stamping impatiently.

“Mean!” cried his mother. “I mean that I took Daisy away, kept her in Sheffield, that she might be saved from a life of shame—saved—oh, God! that I should have to say it—from my son.”

“*You—you* got Daisy away?” half shrieked Richard.

“Yes, I—I,” said Mrs. Glaire, “to save you—to make you an honest man, and that you might keep your word to your poor injured cousin. I did all this to the destruction of the happiness of the most faithful servant that ever served our house, and to break his poor wife’s heart. I did all this sin, Richard, for you—for my boy; but you have beaten me; I am defeated. It has been a hard fight, but it was not to be. There, she has been found out by your emissary, that Big Harry.”

“Hang me if I know what you are talking about,” cried Richard.

“Bah! fool, throw off your disguise,” cried Mrs. Glaire. “If you will be a villain be a bold one, and not a mean, despicable, paltry, cowardly liar. There, go; she has come. Your spies managed well, but they could not foresee that the poor foolish girl would miss you—that you would be a few minutes too late, nor that we should return home early because I was unwell.”

“Here, I’m not going to stop and hear this mad folly,” cried Richard, with his hand upon the door.

“No; go!” cried Mrs. Glaire; “but I curse you.”

“Aunt!” shrieked Eve, clinging to her.

“Stand aside, Eve,” cried Mrs. Glaire, who was white with passion. “Go—go, Richard. It was Daisy Banks who left here. She came to seek you, and she has gone to find you at the works. Go, my son, go; the road is easy and broad, and if it ends in ruin and death”——

“Death!” cried Richard, recoiling.

“Yes, death, for there is mischief abroad.”

“Bah! I’ll hear no more of your mad drivels,” cried the young man savagely. “I’ve heard too much;” and, flinging open the door, he rushed out.

“Aunt, aunt, what have you done?” cried Eve, piteously.

“Broken my poor weary heart,” was the reply, as the stricken woman sank, half-fainting, on the floor.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE WORKS.

As Daisy Banks ran from the house, wild almost with horror and affright, she made straight for the works, feeling that she might yet be in time to warn Richard Glaire of his peril, if she could not stay her father from the terrible deed he was about to commit.

On encountering Big Harry in the great town, that worthy had, on recovering from his surprise at the meeting, told her all—of the plot formed, and that her father, maddened against Richard Glaire for getting her away, was the man who had joined the Brotherhood, and had undertaken to lay the powder for the destruction of the works.

Yielding to her prayers, the great, honest

fellow had agreed to accompany her back ; and not a moment had been lost, but on reaching her home her mother was absent, and Joe Banks had been away all day.

Then came the visit to the House, and her leaving for the works.

“ Wheer next, lass ? ” said Harry, coming out of the shadow where he had been waiting, but Daisy brushed by him and was gone.

“ See theer now,” he muttered. “ What, owd Tommy, is that thou ? ” he cried, as his old friend and fellow-workman, who had in the darkness missed Daisy, ran up.

“ Did’st see Daisy Banks ? ” he cried.

“ Yes, I see her. She’s gone down street like a flash o’ lightning.”

“ No, no ; she must have gone to the works,” cried Tom.

“ Then she’s gone all round town to get to ’em,” said Harry.

“ Come and see first,” cried Tom, and the two men ran towards the gates.

“What time weer it to be, lad?” whispered Harry.

“I don’t know,” said Tom hoarsely; “they’ve kept that to their sens.”

“But owd Joe Banks is going to do it, isn’t he?”

“Yes, yes; but come along quick.”

They reached the gate, but there was no sign of Daisy Banks; all was closed, and to all appearance the place had not been opened for days.

“Theer, I telled ye so,” growled Harry; “she didn’t come this waya at all. She’s gone home.”

“How long would it take us to go?” whispered Tom, who now began to think it possible that Daisy had gone in search of her father.

“Get down theer i’ less than ten minutes, lad, back waya,” replied Harry; “come along.”

Tom tried the gates once more, and then looked down the side alley, but all was still.

“If she has been here, she can’t have stayed,” he said to himself. “Here, quick, Harry, come on, and we may find Joe Banks, too.”

“And if we do, what then?” growled the hammerman.

“We must stop him—hold him—tie his hands—owt to stay him fro’ doing this job.”

“I’m wi’ ye, lad,” said Harry; “he’ll say thanky efterward. If I get a good grip o’ him he wean’t want no bands.”

The two men started off at a race, and as they disappeared Daisy crept out of the opposite door-way, where she had been crouching down, and then tried the gates.

All fast, and she dare not ring the big bell, but stood listening for a moment or two, and then ran swiftly along the wall, and down the side alley to the door that admitted to the counting-house—the alley where her interview with Richard Glaire had been interrupted by the coming of Tom Podmore.

She reached the door and tried the handle, giving it a push, when, to her great joy, she found it yield, and strung up to the pitch of doing anything by her intense excitement, she stepped into the dark entry, the door swinging to behind her, and she heard it catch.

Then for a few minutes she stood still, holding her hand to her heart, which was beating furiously. At last, feeling that she must act, she felt her way along the wall to the counting-house door, looking in to find all still and dark, and then she cried in a low voice, "Father—Mr. Richard—are you here?"

No response, and she went to the door leading into the yard, to find it wide open and all without in the great place perfectly still and dark, while the great heaps of old metal and curiously-shaped moulds and patterns could just be made out in the gloom.

A strange feeling of fear oppressed her, but she fought it back bravely, and went on, avoid-

ing the rough masses in the path, and going straight to the chief door of the great works.

The place was perfectly familiar to her, for she had as a child often brought her father's dinner, and been taken to see the engines, furnaces, and large lathes, with the other weird-looking pieces of machinery, which in those days had to her young eyes a menacing aspect, and seemed as if ready to seize and destroy the little body that crept so cautiously along.

Entering the place then bravely, she went on through the darkness, with outstretched hands, calling softly again and again the name of Richard Glaire or her father. Several times, in spite of her precautions, she struck herself violently against pieces of metal that lay about, or came in contact with machinery or brickwork ; but she forgot the pain in the eagerness of her pursuit till she had convinced herself that no one could be on the basement floor.

Then seeking the steps, she proceeded to the floor above, calling in a low whisper from time to time as she went on between the benches, and past the little window that looked down on the alley, which had afforded Sim Slee a means of entry when the bands were destroyed.

No one on this floor ; and with a shiver, begotten of cold and dread, she proceeded to the steps leading to the next floor, which she searched in turn, ending by going to the third—a repetition of those below.

“There is no one here,” she said to herself at last ; “unless he is asleep.”

She shuddered at this ; and now, with the chilly feeling growing stronger each moment, she made her way amongst the benches and wood-work of this place, which was the pattern shop, and reached the top of the stairs, where she paused ; and then, not satisfied, feeling that this was the most likely place for a man to be in hiding, she went over this upper floor again.

As she searched, the clock at the church struck eleven, and its tones sent a thrill through her, they sounded so solemn ; but directly after, with the tears falling fast, as the old clock bell brought up happy recollections of the past, she began to descend ; but was not half-way down before she heard footsteps, and her name pronounced in an eager whisper—

“ Daisy—Daisy ! ”

She stopped short, trembling with dread. It was Richard Glaire, the man who had had such influence over her, and whom she had told herself that she loved so well. But this feeling of fear that she suffered now could not be love ; she knew that well : and during her late seclusion she had learned to look upon the young man's actions in a new light. His mother's words to her had taken root, and she knew now that his intentions towards her had only been to make her the plaything of the hour of his fleeting liking ; and the girl's face flushed, and her teeth were set, as once again she asked

herself why had she been so weak and vain as to believe this man.

“ Daisy — Daisy — Daisy Banks, are you here ? ” came in a loud whisper ; and still she did not move, but her heart fluttered, and her breath was drawn painfully.

No : she did not care for him now, she felt. It was a dream—a silly love dream, and she had awakened a wiser, stronger girl than she was before.

“ Stronger ! ” she thought ; “ and yet I stand here afraid to speak, afraid to move, when I have come to save him perhaps from a horrible death. I will speak.”

She stopped again, for a terrible thought oppressed her. She must not betray her father. He might even now be coming to the place, if it was true that he was to blow up the works—he might even now be here, and the explosion—Oh, it was too horrible ; she dared not speak even now : she dared not stay. She was not so brave as she thought, and she must fly from

the place, or try to meet her father. Not Richard Glaire ; she could not—dare not meet him again ; for she feared him still, even though she told herself that she was strong. A strange feeling of faintness came over her, all seemed to swim round—and had she not clutched at the handrail, her feelings would have been too much for her, and she would have fallen headlong to the foot of the steep flight.

As it was, she uttered a faint cry, and it betrayed her presence.

“I knew you were here,” cried Richard Glaire, hurriedly ascending the stairs ; “why, Daisy, my little bird, at last—at last. Where have you been ?”

“Then you are safe yet,” she gasped, as he caught her in his arms, though she repulsed him.

“Safe ; yes, my little beauty. I found you had been at the house, and they said you were here—come to look for me. Why, Daisy, this meeting makes up for all my misery since you have been gone.”

Daisy wrenched herself from his arms, exclaiming passionately—

“I came to save you and others, Mr. Glaire, and you act like this. Quick, get away from this place. Your life is in danger.”

“I have heard that tale, my dear,” he said, “till I am tired of it.”

“I tell you,” cried Daisy, as he tried to clasp her again, and she struggled with him; “I tell you there is a plot against you, and that you must go. This place is not safe. You have not a moment to lose.”

“Why,” said Richard, holding her in spite of her struggles; “did you not come to see me and comfort me for being in hiding here?”

“No, no,” cried Daisy, trying to free herself; “I came to warn you. Oh, sir, this is cowardly.”

“Come, Daisy, my little one, why are you struggling? You used not.”

“No,” cried the girl, angrily; “not when I was a silly child and believed you.”

“Come, that’s unkind,” said Richard, laughing. “Where have you been, eh? But there, I know.”

“I tell you, Mr. Richard, you are in danger.”

“Pooh! what danger? We’re safe enough here, Daisy, and no one will interrupt us.”

“I cannot answer questions,” said Daisy. “Oh, pray, pray let us go. I came to save you.”

“Then you do love me still, Daisy?”

“No, no; indeed no, sir, I hate you; but I would not see you hurt.”

“Look here, Daisy,” cried Richard. “I hate mystery. Did you come here alone?”

“Yes, yes—to save you.”

“Thank you, my dear; but now, please, tell me why? No mystery, please, or I shall think this is some trick, and that you have been sent by the men on strike.”

“Indeed, no, Mr. Richard,” cried Daisy, who, in her horror, caught at his arm, and tried to drag him away. “Mr. Richard, sir, you

told me you loved me ; and in those days I was foolish enough to believe you, to the neglect of a good, true man, who wanted to make me his wife."

"Poor idiot!" cried Richard, who was getting out of temper at being so kept at a distance.

"No ; but a good, true man," cried Daisy, indignantly. "I've wakened up from the silly dream you taught me to believe, and now I come to warn you of a great danger, and you scoff at it."

"What's the danger, little one ?"

"I cannot—dare not tell you."

"Then it isn't true. It's an excuse of yours. The old game, Daisy : all promises and love in your letters—all coyness and distance when we meet ; but you are not going to fool me any more, my darling. I don't believe a word of your plot, for no one knows I am here except those who would not betray me."

“What shall I do?” cried Daisy, clasping her hands in agony. “Even now it may be too late.”

“What shall you do, you silly little thing!” cried Richard, whose promises were all forgotten, and he clasped Daisy more tightly; “why, behave like a sensible girl. Why, Daisy, I have not kissed you for weeks, and so must make up for lost time.”

“If you do not loose me, Mr. Richard, I shall scream for help,” cried the girl, now growing frightened.

“And who’s to hear you if you do?” he said, mockingly.

“Those who are coming to destroy your works,” exclaimed Daisy, now fully roused to the peril of her position.

“Let them come!” cried Richard, as he held her more tightly; “when they do,” he added, with a laugh, “I’ll let you go.”

He was drawing Daisy’s face round to his in spite of her struggles, when, in an instant, she

ceased to fight against him, as she exclaimed in a low, awe-stricken whisper—

“Hush! what was that?”

Richard loosed his hold on the instant, and stood listening.

“Nothing but a trick of yours, Miss Daisy,” he cried, catching her arm as she was gliding from him into the darkness.

“Hush! there it is again,” whispered the girl. “I heard it plainly. Pray, pray, let us go.”

“No one can have got in here,” muttered Richard, turning pale, for this time he had distinctly heard some sound from below. “Here, wait a moment, and I’ll go and see.”

“No, no,” faltered Daisy. “Not alone; and you must not leave me. There is danger—there is, indeed, Mr. Richard.”

“Give me your hand, then,” he whispered. “Curse the place; it’s dark enough by night to frighten any one. Mind how you come.”

Daisy clung convulsively to his hand and

arm, as they descended to the second floor, where all seemed to be still, not a sound reaching their ears; and from thence to the first floor, where all was as they had left it.

Here Richard paused for a few moments, but could hear nothing but the beating of their own hearts, for now he, too, was horribly alarmed.

"It's nothing," he said at last. "Daisy, you've been inventing this to make me let you go."

Daisy made no reply, for the horror of some impending evil seemed to be upon her, and with her lips parched, and tongue dry, she could not even utter a word; but clung to him, and tried to urge him away.

"Come along, then, into the counting-house," he said, infected now by the girl's manifest fears. "Mind how you come; the steps are worn. Take care."

But for his arm Daisy would probably have

fallen, but he aided her, and she reached the floor in safety.

“Stop a moment, silly child,” he said, “and I’ll light a match, just to look round and show you that you are frightened at nothing.”

“No, no,” gasped Daisy. “Quick, quick, the door.”

“Well, then, little one, just to prevent our breaking our necks over this cursed machinery.”

“No, no,” moaned Daisy. “I know the way. Here, quick.”

But Richard was already striking the wax match he had taken from a box, and then as the light blazed up he uttered a cry of horror, and let it fall, while Daisy, who took in at a glance the horror of their situation, sank beside the burning match, which blazed for a few moments on the beaten earth, and then went out, leaving them in a darkness greater than before.

CHAPTER XII.

A LATE RECOGNITION.

As Richard Glaire followed Daisy Banks and reached the works, he made for the great gates, took a rapid glance up and down the dark street to see that it was quite forsaken, and then slipped a latch-key in the wicket, which yielded quietly, and he passed in.

“Will she be here?” he said; and then it struck him suddenly that it was impossible: the works had been closely shut up.

“But she came here—to find me. Perhaps she has Joe Banks’s key,” he exclaimed. “At all events I’ll have a look.”

He crossed the yard, entered the great pile of buildings, and listened; then returning, he went to the counting-house, and through the

passage to the dark opening into the alley, to find it on the latch.

“She is here,” he exclaimed, joyously; and, leaving it as it was, he proceeded to the great building, and then began to peer about in the darkness and listen, ending by seeking the first ladder leading to the half-floor.

“She’s playing with me,” he said, half laughing. “She’s a plucky little thing, though, to come here by herself;” and then he ascended, and stopped at one of the windows looking towards the town to listen, but all seemed still.

He had hardly placed his foot on the second flight of stairs, and begun to ascend, when the light of a bull’s-eye lantern was flashed all over the foundry.

“Dark as Jonah’s sea-parlour, my lad,” said a voice. “Come along, all of you,” and several men, who had entered by the counting-house door, and then gone back to fetch something, came silently into the great gloomy place.

They were evidently in their stocking feet, and moved about without a sound, two of them being dimly seen by the lantern light to be carrying small kegs.

“Be keerful wi’ that lantern, Barker,” said the first speaker, who had evidently been drinking.

“Yes, I’m careful enough,” said the man; “but these nails and bits of metal are dreadful to the feet.”

“He, he, he!” laughed Slee, “we shall clear all them away soon. I’m glad I comed. I’m not the man to stay away when theer’s a job o’ this sort on. Look alive, Stocktle.”

“I’m looking alive anew,” said one of the men with the kegs; “but it seems a burning shame to spoil the owd place wheer we’ve made so many honest shillings.”

“None o’ your snivelling, Joe Stocktle,” exclaimed Sim Slee. “Don’t you come power-ing your warm watter on the powther. Is the

place a-bringing you money now, or starving your missus and the bairns ? ”

“ That’s a true word,” said the man, sulkily ; and he placed his keg on the earth, beside one of the thick furnace walls, as Joe Banks, without another word, placed his there too, right in the centre of the building, where the great wall went up as a support to the various floors, close to the huge chimney-shaft, which was continued up a couple of hundred feet above the building.

“ It’ll send the owd shaft down too,” said Sim ; “ and if we’re lucky, the place ’ll catch fire and blaze like owt.”

“ Pray be quick, my lads ; and we’d better go now,” whispered Barker. “ Hush ! wasn’t that a noise ? ”

“ On’y an owd tom cat,” said Slec. “ He lives here, and scarred me finely when I came for the bands. Yow can do wi’out us, now, Joe Banks ? ”

“ Wait a moment,” said the foreman, slowly. “ Get me a crowbar off yon bench.”

Slee fetched the tool, taking the light with him, and casting weird shadows about the vast foundry, as he carried the lantern, and made its light flicker about. Then returning, he stood looking on, and holding the light, his hand trembling as he lighted Joe Banks, while he and the man called Stocktle loosed the top hoops, and wrenched out the heads of the kegs with a recklessness that made Barker's blood run cold, and he, too, shivered so that his teeth chattered.

"Seems a shame to blow up t'owd shop," said Stocktle, again. "Must do it, I s'pose."

"Of course you must, you maukin," whispered Slee. "Theer's all the lads hinging about the market-place to see 'em go up. Now, Joe Banks, tak' this lantern. You knows what to do. Here's the fuse. Shove it in your pocket. Wait till we've gone, then upset both kegs, and then make a good long train right to the door, wheer you'll put your fuse into ground, with a handful o' powther at the end. Open the lantern, and howd fuse to it

a moment, shoot lantern up, and if fuse is well leeted, coot off as hard as you can. Here's the pot. Half fill un, so as to lay a long train."

Joe Banks took the small watering-can handed to him, and proceeded to half fill it from one of the kegs, trying it afterwards, to see if the black grains poured freely from the spout; and finding they did, he set it down.

"Pray come along," whispered Barker.

"I'm wi' you," said Slee; and he followed Barker hastily, the two men making for the counting-house door.

"Tak' care o' yoursen, Joe Banks," said the man left behind. "Shall I stop and help you? Them two's coot awaya."

"No; go after them," said the foreman, speaking almost for the first time.

"Raight," said Stocktle, "On'y look out for yoursen, owd Guy Fox, and don't get blowed up too. Are you all raight?"

"Yes," was the reply; and the man glided

silently amongst the furnaces into the darkness, leaving the stern grey-headed man to his dark task.

He was quick over it, tilting and half emptying the kegs against the wall ; and then, with the pot in one hand, the lantern in the other, he made a path of light along the floor, in which he trickled down a black zigzag pattern for many yards, till the pot was nearly empty, when he poured all the rest in a patch, took out the long black fuse, laid one end in the powder, and drew out the other, ready to thrust in the lantern.

“It’s a mean, cowardly trick,” muttered Banks, darkening the lantern as he put down the pot and stood erect. “What would my owd brother workman say if he could see me now ? Ay, and what would he say to his black-hearted son for robbing me of all I howd dear ? It’s a judgment on him, and he deserves it. Ay, but it’s not like me to do such a thing ; but I’ve said I’d do it, and I will. Who’s yon ? Curse

him ; I wish it were Dick Glaire, and I'd fire the train at once if I died wi' him."

The foreman stood ready, as he heard whispers and descending steps, and ground his teeth together, as he made out that there was a woman's voice as well as a man's.

"It must be Richard Glaire," he muttered, "and who will it be wi' him ?"

He stood listening again, feeling in his mad excitement neither fear of detection nor death, for his sole desire was to obtain one great sweeping revenge on the man whom he now hated with a deadly hate ; and as he listened the thought grew more strongly that this must be Richard holding a meeting with Eve Pelly.

"It can be no one else," he muttered, pressing his hands to his fevered head, and then stooping to feel the fuse and powder. "I don't want to hurt her, poor lass, but she's an enemy now, like her scoundrel o' a cousin. A villain ! a villain ! He's forsaken my poor bairn, then, to come back here and mak' love

to she. If I shrunk from it before, I feel strong now. But I'll be sure first, for, mad as I am again him, I wouldn't send an innocent man to his account. But it must be him, it must be him, sent by his fate to die in the midst of his place.

Joe Banks stood trying to think, but he was in so excited and fevered a state that the effort was vain. He could see nothing but ruin and death. He had promised to fire the train, and he was ready to do it, for passion had long usurped reason, and should he die in the ruins, he cared but little.

Meantime, as he stood intently listening, and with his hand upon the catch of his lantern, ready to apply it to the fuse at any moment, the whisperings continued, ceased within a few yards of where he stood ; and then came the sound of a box being opened. There was a sharp, crackling scratch, and a tiny white flame flashed out in the midst of the darkness.

It lasted but a few moments, for Richard

uttered a cry of dread, and let it fall, but in those moments Joe Banks had seen who struck the match, and that a female companion had sunk fainting to the earth, and the hot rage, that had almost turned his brain, grew ten times hotter.

“You madman!” cried Richard, who had divined what was to take place; and in his dread he became for the time brave, and sought to grasp the man who was charged with the deadly design. “You madman!” he cried. “What are you about to do? Here, help!”

He sought to grasp the foreman, and had not long to wait, for, choking with rage, the injured man stepped forward to seize him in turn, and they closed in a furious struggle, which resulted in the younger man seeming like a child in the mighty arms of his adversary, who lifted him from the ground, dashed him down, and then, panting with exertion and rage, planted a foot upon his chest and held

him there close by the end of the train, while he felt round for the dark lantern he had dropped.

“Banks, Joe Banks, are you mad?” cried Richard, who was half stifled by the pressure upon his breast.

“Yes,” said the foreman, grimly; “mad.”

“What are you going to do?” panted Richard, struggling to remove the foot.

“To do, liar, coward, villain! was it not enew that you had all you could want, but you must come and rob me o’ my poor bairn?”

“Joe—Joe Banks!” panted Richard, in protestation; but his words were stifled, for the maddened man pressed his foot down more firmly on his chest.

“Silence, you villain!” cried Banks, in a low fierce whisper, “or I’ll crash in your chest or break your skull with a piece of iron. Are you going to marry that Eve Pelly?”

“Yes, Joe, yes; but——”

“Silence!” hissed the foreman, “unless you

want to say your prayers. Speak a word aloud, and I'll kill you dead. Now, you want to know why I'm here? I'll tell you. The poor lads thrown out o' work by your cruel ways said they'd blow up the works, for you had injured them so that they would have revenge; and then I said I had greater wrong to bear, and I would do it. Do you want to know more?" he continued, with a savage chuckle. "There lies the powther all of a heap, two barrels full, and here's the train down by your feet. It's aw ready, and there would have been no works by this time if you had not come with she."

"Joe, listen," panted Richard, struggling ineffectually against the pressure.

"Silence!" hissed Banks; and his foot was pressed so savagely down that Richard Glaire thought his end had come, and lay half swooning, with dazzling lights dancing before his eyes, the sound of bells ringing in his ears, and a horrible dread upon him that if he spoke

again the words would be his last. And all this time, like a low hissing sentence of death, went on the words of the foreman, as he bent over him.

“I tell thee I hev but to put the light to the train, and you——. Yes, we shall be blown into eternity unless I run fro’ the place.”

“Your child—Daisy!” panted Richard, in his horror.

“I hev no bairn,” cried Banks, who then uttered an ejaculation indicative of satisfaction, for he had been feeling about, and reached the lantern.

“Banks, Joe Banks, for mercy’s sake,” groaned Richard, hoarsely, “I’m not fit to die.”

“Nay, thou’rt not, and thou’lt be worse if I let thee live, and if thou survives that poor lass will lead a living death.”

“Joe — mercy!” cried Richard, as the pressure on his breast increased.

“Ask it fro’ up yonder,” said the foreman solemnly. “I’ll gi’e you two minutes to pray

while the fuse burns. It'll last two minutes; see, lad."

"Joe, Joe," panted his victim, feebly struggling as against some horrible nightmare, while with starting eye-balls he glared up at the weird, distorted face of his foreman, upon which the light shone strangely as he opened the lantern door, held it to the fuse for a moment, closed it, and hurled it to the other side of the foundry, while the slow match began to burn gradually towards the powder."

"He's mad, he's mad!" moaned Richard, gazing hard with a feeling of horrible fascination at the burning fuse, whose faint sparkling light made the face of Banks look to him like that of some demon. "Joe, for my father's sake!"

"Not for his. Yo' canno' be your father's bairn."

"Joe, for Daisy's sake," panted Richard, again. "Mercy, mercy! it has nearly burned out."

“Pray, fool, pray,” hissed Banks. “It may save you from the curse I give you for blasting my home. I wean’t run. Let it go, for thou’rt sent here to-night to die. It’s God’s vengeance on you for what you’ve done. See the powther catches.”

“It’s devil’s work, not God’s!” shrieked Richard, as, grasping the foot that pressed him down, he made a final effort for life, just as the train caught fire, flashed up, and began to run in a serpentine course towards the barrels.

Another moment and it would have been too late. As it was, Joe Banks took a couple of strides, and swept the powder aside in the middle of the train, so that when the lurid serpent that seemed running its wavy course along the floor, lighting up the works with a strange glow, reached its maker’s foot, it fluttered, sparkled here and there to right and left, and then all was darkness.

“You’re raight,” said Banks, solemnly, from out of the darkness, while, half blinded by the

glare, Richard feebly struggled to his knees, and crouched there, bathed in a chilly sweat. "You're raight; it is devil's work, and I canno' do it. Richard Glaire, I believe I'm mad; and when I found you here, wi' her as lies theer moaning, I said we'd all die together."

"This is horrible, horrible!" moaned Richard.

"Mebbe it is," said Banks, sadly; "but for you, lad, the bitterness o' death is past. It's devil's work, indeed, and it shall not be mine. Get up, and tak' yon poor lass away, lest the fit comes ower me again, and I forget as I'm a man."

Richard groaned, for he was weak and helpless as a babe.

"I give you your life before," continued Banks, moving to where a dim light showed where the lantern lay, and returning with it open, so that its glow shone upon Richard Glaire's white face. "I give it to you again, man. Go, and God forgive you what you've done to me."

Richard made an effort to rise, and stood tottering on his feet, speechless with the reaction from the horror through which he had passed, while Banks crossed to where Daisy was beginning to recover from her swoon.

“Poor bairn!” he said softly; “and I should ha’ slain thee too. Get up, Miss Eve, and some day you may pray for and forgive me.”

He turned the light full upon her as she rose to her knees, then covered her eyes, for the light dazzled her.

“Where am I?” she cried; then, as recollection flashed back, she started up with a cry of “Father—father!”

Joe Banks stood motionless for a few moments, staring wildly at what seemed to him like some horrible vision; and it was not until Daisy rose to her feet that he fully realised what he had so nearly achieved; then the lantern dropped from his hand; he clasped his temples with his sinewy hands, and uttered a

hoarse cry that echoed through the gloomy place—

“MY GOD !”

As the words left his lips he turned slightly, and fell heavily upon the ground, just as there were shouts, the rush of feet ; and, bearing lights, a couple of policemen, Tom, Harry, and about a dozen of the tradespeople, headed by the vicar, rushed into the place.

CHAPTER XIII.

A PERIL PAST.

“THANK Heaven, we’re in time,” exclaimed the vicar. “Back, every man with lights,” he shouted ; “there’s a train.”

There was a rush back for the entrance, but the vicar stood firm, and, taking one of the policemen’s lanterns, he cautiously stepped forward, tracing the train, and scattering it with his feet till he saw the heap that had trickled from the opened kegs.

“Keep your places with the lights,” he cried. “Harry ! Tom ! buckets of water, quick !”

Half-a-dozen started for the yard, where there was a large iron tank outside the door, and bucketsful were brought in rapidly, with which, while the vicar lighted them, Tom and Harry deluged the heap of powder.

"There's no danger now," said the vicar, as the ground was saturated in every direction. "Good heavens ! what a diabolical attempt."

And not till now was attention drawn to Richard Glaire, who sat upon a block of metal, watching the actions of those around him, as their lights feebly illumined the great, gloomy place. He was white as ashes, trembling as if stricken with the palsy ; and when spoken to stared vacantly at the vicar.

"Are you hurt, Mr. Glaire ?" he said kindly.

For answer, Richard burst into an hysterical fit of sobbing, and cried like a child.

"Fetch a little brandy, some one," said the vicar. "He will be better after this. He must have had some terrible shock. Who is this?" he continued, directing his light to where Banks lay insensible, with the blood trickling from a cut upon his forehead, where he had struck it against a rough piece of slag in falling.

"It's Joe Banks," growled Harry, as the

vicar knelt down and quickly bandaged the wound.

At that moment, Daisy, who had remained crouching behind the brickwork of one of the furnaces, came forward trembling.

“Daisy Banks!” cried the vicar in astonishment. “You here?”

“Don’t speak to me; don’t speak to me,” she cried wildly, as she threw herself sobbing beside her father to passionately raise his head, and kiss him again and again. “He’s dead, he’s dead, and I’ve killed—I’ve killed him.”

There was silence for a few moments, which no one cared to break, and Tom Podmore stood with folded arms and heaving breast, gazing down at the weeping figure of her he so dearly loved.

“He’s not dead, my poor girl,” said the vicar, kindly; “only in a swoon. That bleeding will do him good. Constables, we must get him home at once, or—no, you must guard this place. Harry, Podmore, and two

more—a stout piece of carpet from the nearest house. We can carry him in that.”

“Bring him home—to my place,” said Richard Glaire, who had somewhat recovered.

“I think not, Mr. Glaire,” said the vicar, firmly. “His own house will be best.”

“Excuse me, sir,” said the chief policeman. “He’s the leader, I believe; we must have him at the station. The doctor can see him there. He had laid the train, and was to fire it. Harry and Podmore here know.”

Daisy uttered a shriek, and the vicar’s brow knit as he turned to Richard.

“It’s a lie,” cried the latter, sharply. “I was here, and know some scoundrels put the powder here, and the train; but Banks destroyed it, and saved my life.”

The vicar had him by the hand in a moment, and pressed it hard.

“It’s a lie, parson,” he said in a whisper; “but I must tell it. He did save my life.”

“How came he by that cut, then, sir?” said the policeman.

“You see,” said Richard, coldly, “he fell and struck himself against that piece of clinker. He did not know I was there, and that his child had come to warn him, and he was overcome.”

“I will be answerable for his appearance to reply to any charge,” said the vicar.

“There’s no charge against him,” said Richard, hastily. “I saw him destroy the train.”

Daisy crept to his side, and Tom Podmore groaned as he saw her kiss Richard’s hand.

“Very good, sir,” said the constable; “that will do. We’ll watch here, sir, though there’s no fear now; and the others are locked up.”

A piece of carpet was then fetched, and Banks was carefully lifted upon it, four men taking the corners, and bearing him hammock-fashion down the crowded street, the work-

people who had been in the street having been augmented by the rest ; and a strange silence brooded over the place as they talked in whispers, the story growing every instant until it was the common report that Banks and Richard Glaire had met in the foundry, that Banks had been killed, and Richard Glaire was now dying at home.

The gossiping people could not fit Daisy Banks into the story. She was walking beside her stricken father, and they saw her bent head, and heard her bitter sobs ; but it was only natural that she should make her appearance at such a time, and it seemed nothing to them that she should be close to Tom Podmore, who was one of the bearers, though he, poor fellow, winced, as Daisy half-clung to his arm for protection, when the crowd pressed upon them more than once.

On reaching the cottage, the vicar hurried in first, to prepare Mrs. Banks, expecting a burst of lamentation ; but as soon as he had

uttered his first words, Mrs Banks was cold and firm as a stone.

“Is he dead, sir?” she whispered; “tell me true.”

“No, no; and not much injured. I think it is a fit.”

“I wean’t give way, sir,” she panted; and running up-stairs, she began to drag down a mattress and pillow, ready for the suffering man.

“Poor Joe, poor Joe!” she murmured, and then gave a start as she heard the word “Mother!”

“Ay, lass, I’d forgot thee in this new trouble.”

“But you will not send me away, mother?” whispered Daisy—“wait till you know all.”

“I send thee away, lass? Nay, nay, I shouldna do that now,” said Mrs. Banks, sadly.

The next moment she was putting the pillow and arranging it beneath her husband’s head, as he was borne in, the men softly

retiring, and giving place to the doctor, who hurried in, hot and panting.

"Ah, Selwood, what's all this?" he said. "Give me a light quickly."

He was down on his knees directly, examining his patient, removing the bandage, and looking at the cut, the patient's eyes, and carefully loosening all tight clothing.

"Poor fellow!—ah—yes—nasty cut—do him good. Hum! What fools people are; they told me he was killed."

"Will he live, Mr. Purley?" whispered Daisy, hoarsely.

"Ah, Daisy, you come back?" said the doctor. "Live? yes, of course he will. Touch of apoplexy; but we'll bring him round."

"Oh, mother, mother!" moaned Daisy; "I thought I'd killed him;" and she threw herself, sobbing, into her mother's arms.

"Come, come, that won't do," exclaimed the doctor. "You two must help me. Selwood,

you'll do me a good turn by going, and taking all the people with you. We want fresh air."

The vicar nodded, and a few words from him, coupled with the information that Banks was not seriously hurt and would soon recover, sufficed to send the little crowd away.

They followed him, though at a distance, Tom Podmore and Harry acting as his rear-guard, as he made as if to go straight to the House.

He had to pass the Bull, though; and, seeing a group of people there, he made his way through them to where Robinson, the landlord, was standing discussing the events of the evening.

"Robinson," said the vicar, aloud, and his words were listened to eagerly, "I'm afraid this atrocious outrage was hatched here in your house."

"'Strue as I stand here, sir," cried the landlord eagerly, "I knowed nowt of it."

"But you knew that secret meetings were held here?"

"I knowd they'd their meetings, and a lot o' flags and nonsense, sir; but I niver thowt it was owt but foolery, or they shouldn't hev had it here."

"I ask you as a man, Robinson, did you know they meant to blow up the works?"

"No, Mr. Selwood," cried Robinson, indignantly; "and if I had knowed I'd have come and telled you directly."

"I believe you," said the vicar.

"I knowed they talked big, sir," continued Robinson; "but when men do that ower a pipe and a gill o' ale, it's on'y so much blowing off steam like, and does 'em good. Bud look here, sir, there's about a dozen of 'em up in big room now. Come on up, and we'll drift 'em."

He led the way to the club-room, to find it locked on the inside, and on knocking he was asked the pass-word.

“Dal thee silly foolery,” cried the landlord, in a passion, “there it is ;” and, stepping back, a few paces, he ran furiously at the door and dashed it off its hinges ; entering, followed by the vicar, Harry, and Tom, who kept close to protect him from harm.

There were about fourteen men present, and they rose with more of dread than menace in their aspect, half expecting to see the police.

“Look here, lads,” began the landlord—

“Allow me, Mr. Robinson,” said the vicar, stepping forward and looking straight before him. “My men, I look at no man here ; I recognize no man as I say this. Smarting under injury as you thought——”

“Real injury, parson,” cried Stockton.

“Faults on both sides, my man,” continued the vicar. “Some among you destroyed Mr. Glaire’s property. I say, smarting under your injuries, and led away by some foolish, mouth-ing demagogues, you conspired to take the law into your own hands, and, not content with

making two cruel assaults on your employer——”

“Which he well deserved, parson.”

“I cannot enter into that,” said the vicar. “If one man does wrong, it is no excuse for the wrong of others. Our salutary laws will protect even a murderer, and then punish him according to his deserts. But listen—In a few words, you have been led away to conspire for the accomplishment of a most dastardly outrage. I have just come from the works, and I tell you, as a man, that if the scheme had succeeded, they would have been destroyed.”

“Serve him right,” growled a voice.

“All the houses round would have been injured, and the loss of life would have been frightful.”

“Nay, nay, parson,” said Stockton.

“I am giving you my honest conviction, my men,” continued the vicar. “A hundred pounds of powder in a confined space is sufficient to commit awful ravages ; and you forget

what would have followed if that tremendous chimney had fallen. But I have not told you all. If the powder had been fired, three people in the works would have been killed. Those people were Mr. Richard Glaire——”

“Weer he theer, sir?” exclaimed Stockton.

“He was,” said the vicar; “he has been in hiding there from your violence for days. I knew some plot was hatching, and, to save both him and you, I advised his staying in the works, so that you might think he had left the town.”

“Which we did,” muttered two or three.

“I shudder when I think of the consequences of my advice. But listen—there would have been two more horribly mutilated and shattered corpses at this moment—the remains of your foreman and his poor child, Daisy Banks.”

“Oh, coom, parson!” said Stockton.

“I tell you, man, as I rushed in, they were all three there. How they came there together I do not know. I do not want to know. All

I know is that it has pleased God to spare us from a sin for which we should never have forgiven ourselves."

"I don't see as yow had much to do wi' it, parson," said a voice, sneeringly.

"My men, my men," cried the vicar, in a deeply moved voice, "do you think I live here among you without feeling that your joys and sorrows are mine? and your sins are mine as well, for I ought to have taught you better. For God's sake let us have no more of these wretched meetings; break up your society, and act as man to man. Suffer and be strong. Have forbearance, and try to end these dreadful strikes, which fall not on you, but on your wives and children."

"But what call hev you got to interfere?" cried a surly voice.

"Howd hard theer," cried Stockton; "parson's i' the raight. He's spent three hundred pound, if he's spent a penny, over them as was 'most pined to dead."

“That’s raight,” cried several voices.

“Never mind that, my men; it was my duty, even as it is to be the friend and brother of all who are here. But listen——”

“I didn’t come to hear parson preach,” cried a voice.

“One word—listen to me for your own sakes,” cried the vicar, in impassioned tones. “Suppose you had succeeded without the horrible loss of life that must have occurred through your ignorance of the force of powder—suppose the works had been, with all the costly machinery, turned into a heap of ruins?”

“It would hev sarved Richard Glaire well raight,” said some one.

“Grant that it would, but what then, my lads? For Heaven’s sake look a little further than the satisfaction of a paltry, unmanly desire for revenge.”

“It would hev ruined Dicky Glaire,” cried Stockton.

“Yes, my men; but it would have ruined you

as well. Those works could not have been restored for years: perhaps never; the trade would have gone elsewhere, and, as I take it, over two hundred men and their wives and children must have gone elsewhere for bread."

"That's raight enew, parson," cried Stockton; "but all the same if some cursed, cowardly spy hadn't betrayed us the wucks would hev been down."

"That betrayal of your evil plans came about more strangely than you can imagine," said the vicar. "I have suspected something, and been constantly on the watch."

"Strange and kind of you, too, parson," said Stockton, with a laugh.

"You will think so some day, my man."

"Bud I know who it weer," said Stockton. "Theer he stands; it were Tom Podmore. He weer not sweered in."

"Then he did not betray you," said the vicar, as a menacing growl arose; but Tom stood perfectly firm.

“No, it weern’t Tom Podmore,” cried Big Harry, stalking forward, one big shoulder at a time. “If you want to know who did it, here he is—I did; and I’m glad on it. Dal me! I’m glad as th’owd wucks aint down, and I’ll faight any two o’ you as don’t like it; so now then.”

There was another growl, but no one took up the challenge.

“See here, lads,” cried Harry. “I went awaya so as to hev now’t to do wi’ it, and I didn’t tell anybody; only telled parson to give Dicky Glaire the word to look out.”

“And you was sweered in, Harry,” cried Stockton.

“So I weer,” said the big fellow; “and, as I said afore, I’ll faight any man as don’t like it. Well, I goes on to Sheffle to get wuck, and there I happened o’ Daisy Banks; and when the poor little lass got howd o’ me, and begged me to tell all about her owd man, why dal me, I weer obliged to tell her how he was a-going

to——dal it, parson, don't slap a man o' the mooth that how."

"You've said enough, Harry," cried the vicar. "We want to know no more. I answer for you that you did quite right, and some day these men will thank you, as I do now, for saving us all from this horror. Now, my men, you know that Slee and Barker, that stranger, are in the station."

"Oh, ay, we know that," said Stockton; "and I vote, lads, we hev 'em out."

"No, no; let them get the punishment they deserve," cried the vicar.

"Well, lookye here, parson," cried Stockton; "the game's up, I s'pose, and you've got the police outside. I was in it, and I'm not going to turn tail. Here I am."

"My man, I will not know your name, nor the name of any man here. I will not recognize anybody; I came as your friend, not as a spy. I came to ask you to break up your wretched bond of union, and to go forth home

as honest men. Where a union is made for the fair protection of a workman's rights, I can respect it ; but a brotherhood that blasphemes its own name by engaging in what may prove wholesale murder, is a monster that you yourselves must crush. I have no more to say. Go home."

"Parson's raight, lads!" said Stockton, throwing off his defiant air. "Let's go. Parson, it was a damned cowardly trick, but Dicky Glaire had made us strange and mad."

"It weer owd Simmy Slee as made it wuss, wi' cootting o' them bands," said Big Harry. "We should ha' been at wuck again if it hadn't been for that."

"Quick, lads!" cried a man, running in. "Sim Slee and Barker's broke out o' th'owd shop, and the police are coming down here."

"Theer, parson," said Stockton, with a bitter smile ; "th' game's oop."

For answer, the vicar pointed to the windows, and in less than a minute the room was

empty, though there would have been plenty of time to escape by the door, for the one policeman coming on the mission to see if Slee had made for the meeting-place of his party did not hurry his footsteps, partly from reasons of dignity, and partly because he was alone.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FAITHFUL LOVER.

THE announcement was quite correct. Sim Slee and his companions had broken away through the ceiling, dislodged the tiles, and escaped; and when the vicar reached home, he found Mrs. Slee waiting up for him, trembling and pale, while her eyes were red with weeping. She clung to him hysterically, and asked if the news was true, and that her husband was in prison.

"They came and told me the police had got him," she sobbed. "Ah, he's a bad one sometimes, but he's my maister, sir, he's my maister."

"He was taken, Mrs. Slee," said the vicar, "I'm sorry to say. I was present. You know I went out to-night, for I was in dread of some

outrage; and after being about a time, I found that something was wrong, for the men were all waiting as in expectation."

"He always would mix himself up with these troubles i'stead o' wucking," sobbed the poor woman.

"Fortunately I met two of the men I could trust, and found that an attempt was to be made to blow up the works."

"Ah, but Sim wouldn't do that, sir," sobbed Mrs. Slee. "He dursen't."

"I'm sorry to say, Mrs. Slee, that one of the policemen had watched him, and seen him help to carry a barrel of powder to the works."

"Just like him—just like him," sobbed Mrs. Slee; "but some one else was to fire it."

"How did you know that?" said the vicar, sharply.

"I only know as he dursen't hev done it hissen," sobbed the poor woman. "Poor lad, poor lad, there was nowt again him but the drink."

“The men I met were in search of Daisy Banks,” continued the vicar; “and we joined hands with the police, who took your husband and that man from London, and afterwards we reached the works, and they are safe.”

“I’m strange and glad they’ve took that London man,” sobbed Mrs. Slee; “but poor Sim! Poor, poor Sim! But I must go and say a word o’ comfort to him. Smith, at station’s a good, kind man.”

“Who’ll ever say that woman is not faithful?” said the vicar to himself, as Mrs. Slee hurried away to get her print hood, and, late as it was, to make her way to the station; but as she came back sobbing bitterly, he laid his hand upon her arm.

“You need not go, Mrs. Slee; your husband and his confederate have escaped.”

“Escaped? got awaya?” cried Mrs. Slee.

“Yes.”

“Gone out o’ the town?”

“Undoubtedly.”

"Then," cried Mrs. Slee, wiping her eyes with a hasty snatch or two of her apron, "I'm glad on it. A bad villain, to go and try to do such a thing by the place as he made his bread by. I hope to goodness he'll niver come back," she cried, in her old sharp vinegary tone. "I hope I may niver set eyes upon him again. Bud I don't want him to go to prison. Bud you're not going out again to-night, sir?" she said, imploringly.

"I must go up to the House and see that all is well there, Mrs. Slee," he replied; "and call as I go and see how poor Banks is."

"Bud is it true, sir, that Daisy has come back?"

"Yes," said the vicar, sadly. "Poor girl, she has returned."

"Bud you wean't go now, sir; it's close upon two o'clock."

"Lie down on the sofa, Mrs. Slee. I shall be able to wake you when I come back."

"Theer niver was such a man," muttered

Mrs. Slee, as she let him out; "and as for that Sim, well, I'm ommost sorry he did get away."

As the vicar approached the foreman's cottage he saw some one cross the lighted window, and on getting nearer he recognized the figure.

"Is that you, Podmore?" he said in a low voice.

"Yes, sir, yes," was the reply. "I only thought I'd like to know how poor Joe Banks is getting on."

"I'm going in, and if you'll wait I'll tell you."

"Thank ye, sir, kindly," said the young man. "I will wait."

"Poor fellow!" thought the vicar, with a sigh; "even now, when she comes back stained and hopeless to the old home, his love clings to her still. It's a strange thing this love! Shall she then, and in spite of all, find that I cannot root up a foolish hopeless passion that makes

me weak—weak even as that poor fellow there ?”

A low knock brought Daisy to the door, and on entering, it was to find Mrs. Banks on her knees by her husband, who seemed in a heavy sleep. The doctor had been again, and had only left half-an-hour before.

“He says there’s nowt to fear, sir,” whispered Mrs. Banks ; “but, oh, sir, will he live ?”

“We are in His hands, Mrs. Banks,” was the reply. “I hope and pray he may.”

Daisy was looking on with dilated eyes, and pale, drawn face, and as, after some little time, during which he had sought with homely, friendly words to comfort the trembling wife, he rose to go, Daisy approached to let him out, when fancying that he shrank from her, the poor girl’s face became convulsed, and she tried hard but could not stifle a low wail.

She opened the door as he kindly said “Good night ;” but as the faint light shone

out across the garden and on to the low hedge, Daisy caught him by the arm.

“Don’t go, sir,” she whispered, in a frightened voice ; “it mayn’t be safe. Look : there’s a man watching you.”

“You are unnerved,” he said, kindly ; and then without thinking—“It is only Podmore ; he was waiting as I came in.”

“Tom !” the poor girl ejaculated, catching his arm, “is it Tom ? Oh, sir, for the love of God, tell him I’m not the wicked girl he thinks.”

“My poor girl !”

“I was very wicked and weak, sir, in behaving as I did ; but tell him—I must speak now—tell him it was Mrs. Glaire sent me away.”

“Mrs. Glaire sent you away ?” exclaimed the vicar.

“Yes, yes, yes,” sobbed Daisy ; “so that—her son—”

“To get you away from Richard Glaire ?”

"Yes, sir; yes. I wish—I wish I'd never seen him."

"How came you at the foundry to-night?" he said sharply.

"I went to tell him of the danger, sir. I went to the House first, and they told me he was there. I hate him, I hate him," she cried, passionately, heedless of the apparent incongruity of her words, "and everybody thinks me wicked and bad."

"Is this true, Daisy Banks?" exclaimed the vicar.

"She couldn't tell a lie, sir," cried a hoarse voice. "Daisy, my poor bairn, I don't think it no more."

"Tom!" sobbed Daisy, with an hysterical cry; and the next moment she was sobbing on his breast, while the vicar softly withdrew, to turn, however, when he was fifty yards away, and see that the cottage door opened, and that two figures entered together before it was closed.

“Thank God!” he said softly—“thank God!”

Lights were burning at the House as he reached the door, and, under the circumstances, he knocked and was admitted by the white-faced, trembling servant, who had been sitting with one of the policemen in the hall, the other guarding the works.

“Don’t be alarmed, my girl, there is no bad news,” he said; and with a sigh of relief the girl showed him in to where Richard, Eve, and Mrs. Glaire were seated, all watchful, pale, and ready to take alarm at the least sound.

“I’m glad you have come, Mr. Selwood,” exclaimed Mrs. Glaire; while Richard gave him a sulky nod, Eve trying to rise, but sinking back trembling.

“I should have been here sooner,” he said, “but I have had much to do.”

“Is there any fresh danger?”

“None whatever,” said the vicar. “I think the storm is over—I hope for good.”

Mrs. Glaire gave a sigh of relief, and then wondered, as she saw the vicar cross the room ; but the next minute a faint flush came into her pale cheeks, and she tottered to where Eve was sitting, and buried her face on her shoulder.

“Mr. Glaire,” said the vicar, firmly, as he nerved himself for what he had to say, determined, as he was, to leave nothing undone in what he looked upon as his duty—“Mr. Glaire, I have done you a grievous wrong ; I humbly ask your pardon.”

“What do you mean ?” said Richard, starting, and wondering, with his customary distrust in human nature, whether it was some trap.

“I mean that, in common with others, I believed you guilty of inveigling Daisy Banks away.”

“It don't matter to me what people think,” said Richard, roughly.

“I am sorry I misjudged you,” continued the vicar ; “and once more I ask your pardon.”

“It don’t matter,” said Richard.

“Mrs. Glaire,” the vicar continued, kindly, as he drew a chair to her side and took her hand, “you did a foolish, cruel thing in this.”

“Then you know all?” she sobbed.

“Yes, all—from the lips of Daisy herself. I will not blame you, though, for the act has recoiled upon yourself, and it is only by great mercy that, embittered as these men were through it, a horrible crime has not been committed.”

“I did it—I did it to save him,” sobbed Mrs. Glaire. “I am a mother, and he is my only boy.”

“Poor, stricken Banks is a father, and Daisy is his only child. Mrs. Glaire, you did him a cruel wrong. Why did you not trust me?”

“I was mad and foolish,” she sobbed. “I dared not trust any one, even Daisy; and I thought it would be best for all—that it would save her, and it has been all in vain. Look at him,” she cried angrily; “after all, he

defies me, insults his cousin's love, and, when the poor, foolish girl comes back, his first act is to seek her, to the forgetting of his every promise to us both."

Eve had covered her face with her hands.

"Daisy is as bad as he," continued Mrs. Glaire, angrily.

"There you are mistaken," said the vicar; "her act to-night was to warn your son of his dreadful danger. She went to save him from a terrible death."

"Pray say no more," said Mrs. Glaire, shuddering; and Richard turned of a sallow yellow.

"It has been a terrible affair," said the vicar; "but I sincerely hope that all is over, for your act has borne fruits, Mrs. Glaire, and Daisy has seen the folly of the past."

Richard looked up wonderingly, but refused to meet their visitor's eye.

"I have spoken hastily, and I owe you an apology, Miss Pelly," continued the vicar,

rising; "but it was better to be plain even before you. I was only too glad, though, to come and apologise to Mr. Glaire for the wrong I had done."

"But poor Joe Banks?" exclaimed Mrs. Glaire.

"He seems to have been struck down by an apoplectic fit. He was shocked, no doubt, at finding that so dastardly an attempt had been made, and at the sight of your son and his child in such imminent peril. I hope, however, and sincerely believe, that he will recover. I have just come from there. Good night."

He pressed Mrs. Glaire's hand, and held that of Eve for a few moments, saying to himself, "Poor girl, I have lightened her heart of some of its load. I have somewhat cleared the man she loves."

"Good night, Mr. Glaire," he said, turning to Richard.

"I'll see you out," said Richard; and he followed him to the now vacant hall.

"What did you mean," he said, roughly, "about Daisy?"

"I mean," said the vicar, laying his hand upon the young man's shoulder, "that she has awakened to the folly and weakness of her dealings with you, sir, and to the truth, honesty, and faith of the man who has loved her for so long."

"Podmore?" hissed Richard.

"Yes, Podmore. Now, Mr. Glaire, your course is open."

"What do you mean?" cried Richard, angrily.

"Act as a man of honour."

"I don't understand you."

"And all will be forgiven. Good night."

"Curse him!" cried Richard, with an impatient stamp; and he stood gnawing his fair moustache. Then, with a smile of triumph, damped by a hasty glance of fear up and down the street, he hurriedly closed the door.

CHAPTER XV.

DAISY'S LETTER.

THE weeks slipped rapidly by, and a great change had come over Dumford. The sky was blackened once more with smoke, the furnaces roared, there was the loud chink of metal heard, and the hiss of steam as the engines thudded and clanked, while at dinner time the great gates gave forth their troops of grimy workmen.

Homes looked bright once more, and "my maister" was not seen with lowering brow leaning against the door-post all day long, but tired and hearty, ready to play with the bairns, or busy himself in his bit of garden.

The trade, too, had brightened up, and one and all thanked goodness that their troubles

were over, and prayed that they might be long in coming again.

Something of a search had been made for Sim Slee, and the police authorities had been pretty active ; but Sim and the "deppitation" managed to keep out of sight, and Richard Glaire was in no wise anxious to have the matter too closely investigated.

He kept to his story that he found the train laid in the foundry, and Banks the foreman destroyed it, and the place was saved. This he opened at once, and the men gladly resumed work, the vicar's influence telling upon them, and one and all being ready to ignore the past, and try to condone it by regular attendance at the time-keeper's wicket.

Banks recovered rapidly, and, on learning the truth, sent for Richard, who, however, refused to go to the house to see him, while on his part the foreman declined to resume his position at the foundry.

"No, sir," he said to the vicar ; "I weer in

the wrong, and I shouldn't feel it weer raight to go back theer again. I'm sorry I misjudged him as I did, and I weer too hard upon him ; but he hasn't used me well, neither has Mrs. Glaire. But theer, let bygones be bygones. I shan't starve, and I'm only too happy to hev my poor lass back again, safe and sound—safe and sound, while the missus is in high feather to find that Daisy and her fav'rite, Tom Podmore, hev come together efter all."

That same day, as it happened, Mrs. Glaire called at the cottage, with Eve Pelly, and while the former talked with her old foreman, Eve went into the little garden with Daisy.

"I've called to ask you to come back, Joe Banks, at my son's wish," said Mrs. Glaire. "He desires that we bury the past, and that you resume your post, for the place is not the same without you."

"Nay, Mrs. Glaire, nay," said Banks, shaking his head ; "that can never be again. I should hev had to give it up some day, so let

it be now. And, as you say, ma'am, let bygones be bygones. We were both in the wrong."

"Both, Joe," said Mrs. Glaire, sadly; "but you will forgive me. I did what I did for the best."

"Ay, I believe thee, but it weer very hard to bear. I deserved it, though, for I might hev knowed that he niver meant to wed my poor lass. Bud theer that's all past and gone—past and gone. Hey, ma'am, look at them two i' the garden. They seem good friends enew now. And so she's to be married to Master Dick to-morrow?"

"Yes, Joe," said Mrs. Glaire, hastily, "it will be for the best. My son is all that I could wish for now;" and they sat looking out at the two young girls as they stood talking.

Their conversation had been on indifferent things for some time, but Daisy felt a guilty knowledge of something she ought to tell, for Eve was so sweet and gentle with her; not one

word or look of reproach had been said, but there had so far been no word of the future.

At length Daisy spoke out.

“Do you quite forgive me, Miss Eve?” she said. “I could not help it then, though I fought against it, and was wretched all the time.”

“Yes, Daisy, yes,” cried Eve, eagerly ; and she took the other's hand ; “but tell me truly—do you—do you—oh, I cannot say it.”

“Do I care for Mr. Richard Glaire?” said Daisy, with a strange smile. “Do I feel hurt because you will be married to him to-morrow? Not a bit. Don't think that, dear Miss Eve, for I love poor Tom with all my heart, and only wish I could make him a better wife.”

“And you will be married soon, too?” exclaimed Eve.

“Maybe in a month or two,” said Daisy, looking sadly at her visitor ; “we do not want to hurry it on. I wish you every happiness, Miss Eve.”

"And I you, Daisy," said Eve, looking at her with a wondering wistful look, and asking herself how it was that Richard should have conceived so mad a passion for this girl, while for her his attentions had been of the coldest type.

"Mr. Selwood is going to marry you, then?" said Daisy, quietly, for want of something to carry on the conversation. "But what ails you, Miss Eve, are you ill?"

"No, no, nothing," said Eve, hastily. "It is hot to-day, that's all."

And then the two girls stood silent for a while, Eve thinking that the vicar came so seldom now, and then his visits were so quiet and formal; while Daisy kept asking herself one question, and that was—

"Shall I tell her?"

And the answer—

"No, it would be cruel now, and once they and I are married, all that will be over."

When the visitors had gone, Daisy went up

to her bed-room, and took from a little drawer a note which she had received the previous night. It ran as follows :—

“ You know how I love you, and how I have watched for weeks for a chance to speak to you. I have been night after night at the old places, believing you would come, but not one glance have I had of you, not one word. Dearest Daisy, by all our old meetings, I ask you to give me one more. Don't heed the chatter of the place, but come up to the old spot as soon as you receive this, for I am obliged to write. If too late I will be there to-morrow night. Only come and say one loving word to me, and all you have heard shall be as nothing. I cannot live without you, so come, and if you will I am ready to take you anywhere—far away, as I have promised you before.”

Daisy sat looking at the letter, and read it again and again.

“ Only to think,” she said at last ; “ a few

months ago I should have sighed and sobbed over that note, and been almost ready to be dragged by him where he would, while now—it makes me almost sick. What could I have seen in his soft boyish face to make me feel as I did. But what shall I do? It seems cruel to let that poor girl go to the church with such a man, only that she might save him. And suppose he makes her miserable for life.”

Daisy turned pale, and sat thinking till she heard her father call, and then she hastily thrust the letter into her bosom, her face grew radiant, and she hurried down, for her father's words had been—

“Daisy, lass, here's Tom!”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EVE OF THE WEDDING.

THAT same evening Eve Pelly was in the garden with Mrs. Glaire—the old familiar garden where she had spent so many happy hours, while now she was sad with a sadness that made the tears rise and fill her eyes.

The old place, with its abundant flowers, its roses climbing the old red-brick wall, the well-shaven lawn, with its quaint rustic vases and flower-beds, and the seats where she had read and worked since a child. It was her dear old home, and she was not going to leave it, but all the same, on this the eve of her marriage, it seemed to her that the end had come, and that she was about to bid it all farewell.

It had been an anxious day, for many friends

had called, and present after present had been brought, all of which, in spite of herself, she had received with tears, and gladly escaped afterwards to the solitude of her own room.

Even the workmen had clubbed together, and, in spite of past hard times, bought a handsome silver teapot, which came "With the men's dooty to Miss Eve."

For they recalled her sweet gentle face, patiently watching by or bringing flowers to many a sick wife or child; and it was said that every man in the works, with all his belongings, was to be at the church next morning.

Mrs. Glaire was with Eve, but at last she said she would go in, the latter pleading that she would like to stay a little longer in the soft glow of the evening sun; and so it happened that at last she was left, and feeling glad at heart that Richard had been away all day, she sat down alone to think.

It was so strange she could hardly realize it,

and yet this was the last day, and to-morrow she would be Richard's wife.

The warm glow of the setting sun was around her, but a deadly pallor was upon her face, and she began to tremble.

"Am I going to be ill?" she asked herself; and then, making an effort, she tried to shake off the feeling.

"Richard's wife," she mused. "May I have strength to make him love me dearly, and to be to him the best of wives."

It was a fervent wish, but as it passed her trembling lips, the tears began to flow, and though she fought against it, the thoughts would come rushing through her brain of what might have been had some one else known her sooner, and not looked down upon her as a poor weak, simple girl.

"Oh, but this is dreadful," she moaned; "disloyal to poor Dick — cruel to myself. What shall I do!"

She was hastily drying her eyes, when a

step on the gravel startled her, and Jacky Budd appeared, red-nosed as of old, and bearing a small round basket, and a packet.

“From Master Selwood, Miss Eve. Parson said I was to gi’e ’em to yow, so I brote ’em down the garden mysen, and my dooty to you, Miss, and may you be very happy, and I’d take it kindly if yow’d let me drink your health, and long life to you.”

Eve smiled her thanks as she placed a shilling in his hand, sending Jacky away a happy man, as he calculated that that shilling contained eight gills of ale, and to him what he called comfort for his sorrows.

As the gardener went away Eve’s agitation became excessive, and she hardly dared to lift the lid of the basket.

But a short time since, and she had mentally reproached him for forgetting her, as no token whatever had arrived, only a formal note to her aunt, saying that he would be at the church at ten the next morning, while all the time his

thoughts had been of her, for here was the token.

A glad flush overspread her cheeks, as at last she took the basket and raised the lid, to find within a large bouquet of costly white exotics, the stephanotis amongst which sent forth its sweet perfume, mingled with that of orange blossoms—a gift to a bride.

“A gift to a bride,” she whispered, and the flush faded, even as the sunbeams were paling fast in the trees above her head.

A bitter sigh escaped her lips—a sigh that was almost a moan, and as she raised the bouquet and kissed it, the tears fell fast, and lay glistening like rain amidst the petals.

“If he knew; if he knew,” she whispered, “it would be cruel; but he does not know—he never will know, and after to-night this must be as a dream.”

Almost mechanically she took the little square white packet that lay on the garden seat by her side, and breaking the seal, on

which was the vicar's crest, she found a small square morocco case; and when at last her trembling fingers had pressed the snap and raised the lid, there upon pale blue velvet lay a large oval locket, crusted with diamonds and pearls, a costly gift that glistened in the fading light, and beside it a scrap of paper, with the words—

“God bless you! May you be very happy.”

Eve sat with one hand laid upon her bosom to still its throbbings, and then her lips were pressed to the locket—longer still to the scrap of paper, before the case was shut, and she sat gazing up at the first stars in the pale, soft sky.

A low, deep sigh escaped her lips, and then with a weary look round—

“I am stronger now,” she said, and rose to go, but only shrank back in her seat as she heard a rustling noise, and then a thud, as if some one had jumped from the wall, while

before she could recover herself, Tom Podmore stood before her.

“Is—is anything wrong?” she gasped; for in her nervous state this sudden apparition suggested untold horrors to her excited brain.

“It’s only me, Miss Eve. I wanted just a word.”

“Why — why did you not come to the house?” she faltered.

“Don’t be scarred, miss. I only wanted to be sure o’ seeing you alone. I just want to ask you something.”

“Yes,” she said, composing herself.

“I want to ask you to forgive me, miss, if I hurt your feelings, and do something as’ll make you feel bitter again me.”

“You would not hurt me, Tom?” said Eve, rising and laying her hand upon his arm.

“God knows I wouldn’t, miss, any more than I would one of His angels,” said the young fellow, excitedly; “and that’s why I’ve come. I couldn’t feel as it weer raight not to

come, and even though you may think it spiteful, it isn't, but on'y for your sake alone."

"Yes," said Eve, who felt giddy. "You have something dreadful to tell me."

"No, Miss," said the young man, solemnly, "not to tell you, only a note to gi'e you."

"A note—from Mr. Selwood?"

"No, miss," said Tom, not seeing the warm flush in the girl's face, "a note as weer sent last night to my Daisy, and which she give to me an hour ago."

"A note?" faltered Eve, again.

"Yes, miss, a note. Daisy talked it ower wi' me, and I said as you ought to see it; and even if it hurts you sore, I felt I must gi'e it to you, and theer it is."

Eve felt the paper, and was aware of the fact that her visitor had scrambled over the wall, and was gone, and still she stood clutching the paper tightly, till a voice made her start, and thrust the paper into her bosom.

"Eve, my child, it is damp and late."

It was Mrs. Glaire calling, and, picking up her presents, Eve slowly went up the garden, feeling like one in a dream, till she entered through the open window, where Mrs. Glaire was waiting.

“Why, you are quite cold, my child,” said Mrs. Glaire, tenderly, as she closed the windows, and led the trembling girl to an easy chair by the tea-table, the shaded lamp shedding a pleasant glow upon the steaming urn.

“It is getting cold, aunt,” said Eve, with a shiver; and she drank the tea poured ready for her with avidity.

“More presents, my darling?” said Mrs. Glaire, leaning over and kissing her. “Eve, child, you are making me very happy.”

Eve’s arms were flung round her neck, and she sobbed there in silence for a few moments.

“Don’t cry, my darling; try and think it is for the best. It is—you know it is, and the past must all be forgotten. But where is

Dick? He must be buying presents, or arranging something, or he would be here," she said, cheerfully. "By the way, Eve, what are those? Did Richard send them?"

"No, aunt," said Eve, hoarsely; "they are from Mr. Selwood."

"Always a kind, good friend," said Mrs. Glaire, whose voice shook a little as she looked at the gifts. "Make Richard think better of him, Eve, for he is a true, good friend."

Eve did not answer, for her hand was upon her breast, and beneath that hand she could feel the paper. Her great dread was that Richard should come back, and she prayed that he might not return.

Ten o'clock sounded, and then eleven, from the little pendule on the chimney-piece, and still he did not come; and Mrs. Glaire, noticing the poor girl's agitation, proposed rest.

"I will sit up for Dick, Eve," she said, cheerfully. "He is preparing some surprise;" but, as soon as her niece had kissed her lovingly,

and left the room, a haggard look came over the mother's countenance, and she knelt down for a few moments beside the couch.

She started up, though, for she heard her son's step in the hall, and he entered directly, looking hot and flushed.

"Where's Evey?" he asked.

"Gone to bed, my boy," replied Mrs. Glaire. "Dick, you should have stayed at home to-night."

"Oh, all right," he said, lightly, and with a bitter sneer; "it's the last night, and I thought I might have a run."

"I'm not blaming you, dear," said Mrs. Glaire, kissing his forehead; "only poor Eve looked so sad and ill to-night."

Had she seen her then, she would have cried out in fear, for, with an open paper in her hand, Eve was pacing up and down her room, to throw herself at last upon her knees in agony, and after many hours sob herself to sleep.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HAPPY DAY.

It was gala day in Dumford. The past bitter times were forgotten, and the men had rigged up an arch of evergreens. The children were in their best, and gardens had been stripped of their flowers. Half the town had been twice to the Bull to see the barouche and the four greys that had been ordered from Ranby, and the postboys, in their white beaver hats, had been asked to drink more times than was safe for those they had to drive.

The church, too, was decorated with flowers from the vicarage garden, and new gravel laid down from porch to gate. The ringers were there, and the singers, and the musicians making their way to the loft, while the various pews and sittings were filled to a degree "not

knowed," Jacky Budd said, "for years an' years."

The school children were ready, armed with baskets of flowers, and had been well tutored by the school-mistress to throw them as the bride and bridegroom came out. This lady sighed as she saw the preparations, and told Jacky Budd to open more windows, because the bodies smelt so bad, and Jacky said they did, and it gave him quite a sinking: but the hint was not taken.

In the vicarage Murray Selwood sat looking pale and stern, beside his untasted breakfast, and it was not till, with affectionate earnestness and the tears in her eyes, Mrs. Slee had begged him to take a cup of tea, that he had yielded, and eaten also a slice of toast.

"I know thou'rt ill, sir," she said. "Let me send for Mr. Purley."

"No, no, Mrs. Slee," he said, shaking off his air of gloom; "only a fit of low spirits. I shall be better soon."

Mrs. Slee shook her head as she went back to the kitchen.

“He wean’t: he’s been getting worse for weeks and weeks, and it makes me wretched to see him look so wankle.”

Meanwhile at the House all was excitement. Eve had risen at daybreak to sit and watch the rising sun and ask herself what she should do. She had promised to be Richard’s wife. Her aunt’s happiness, perhaps her life, depended upon it, and it was to save her cousin. She was to redeem him, offering herself as a sacrifice to bring him back to better ways, to make him a good and faithful husband, and yet in her bosom lay those damning lines, telling of his infidelity in spirit—of his passion for another, and again and again she wailed—

“He never loved me, and he never will.”

Should she go—could she fly somewhere far away, where she might work and gain her own living, anywhere, in any humble station, in peace?

And Richard—her aunt ?

No, no, it was impossible ; and think how she would, the bitter feeling came back to her that she had promised her aunt, and she must keep her word.

And besides, if Richard was like this now, what would he be if she refused him at this eleventh hour, and cast him off. She shuddered at the thought, and at last grew calmer and more resigned.

In this way the hours passed on, till in a quiet mechanical manner she was dressed by the maid, who was enthusiastic in her praises of dress, jewels, flowers, everything.

Mrs. Glaire was very pale, but bright and active, and in a supercilious, half-sneering way, Richard watched till all was ready, and the guests who had been invited had arrived.

A look from his mother brought him a little more to his senses, and he went to and kissed Eve, to find her lips like fire, while her hands

were as ice, and at last he sat there peevish and impatient.

"I want it over," he said, angrily, to Mrs. Glaire. "I hate being made such an exhibition of. Will the carriages never come?"

An end was put to his impatience by the arrival of the first, in which he took his departure with his best man, his appearance being the signal for a volley of cheers.

Mrs. Glaire went last, in the same carriage with Mr. Purley, the doctor, and Eve, the stout old fellow trying to keep up the bride's spirits by jokes of his ordinary calibre, the principal one being that he hoped the carriage would not break down under his weight, a witticism at which he laughed heartily, as he responded with bows and hand-wavings to the cheers of the people who lined the High Street of the little town.

Everything looked bright and gay, for the sun shone brilliantly; ropes laden with streamers were stretched across the street,

while flags hung here and there, where satisfactory places could be found ; and in front of the Bull, a party of the workmen had arranged a little battery of roughly-cast guns, sufficiently strong and large to give a good report when loaded with powder, the landlord having arranged to have a red-hot poker ready for discharging the pieces as soon as the wedding was over.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“WILT THOU——?”

THE old troubles of the strike were over and forgotten, and the town's intent on this day was to give itself up to feasting, with its ordinary accompaniment of more drink than was good for those who partook.

Down by the churchyard the crowd had long secured to itself the best positions, the favourite places for viewing the coming and departing of the bridal party being the churchyard wall and the two railed tombs; but the boys put up with tombstones, and hurrahed till they were hoarse.

Jacky Budd got the first cheer, as he went up solemnly to the church door, evidently feeling his own importance, but he was checked

half-way along the path by some one saying in a quiet, remonstrating tone—

“Say, Jacky, wean’t yow stop an’ hev a drain?”

He looked sharply round, and his hand went to his mouth, while a roar of laughter rose up from the merry crowd, and hastened his steps into the porch.

Trappy Pape was the next to be joked, as he came up hugging the green baize bag containing his violoncello.

“Say, Trappy, hast thee fed thee be-ast?” said one.

“Hast giv’ the poor owd fiddle its rozzum?” cried another.

“Trappy, lad,” shouted another, “does ta sleep inside that owd thing?”

The violoncello player hurried into the church, and Joey South came into view, to the great delight of the crowd.

“Here comes owd Poll Pry,” cried one.

“Look at his owd umbrella,” cried another.

"Why don't ta put th' umbrella up?" cried another voice, "it's going to ree-an next week."

Here there was another roar of laughter.

"Look at his leather breeches."

"Say, Joey, wast ta sewed in 'em when they weer made?"

"Ay, lad, they weer made on him i' the year one, and niver been off since."

"Mind yon goon don't go off," cried one of the chief jokers, as the boy came by bearing Joey's bassoon.

"Is she loaded, Joey?"

"Ay, lad, he rams her full wi' kitchen poker," cried another.

Joey South escaped into the porch, grinning angrily, for a fresh minstrel appeared in the shape of "Owd Billy Stocks" with his clarionet.

"Hey, lads, here's owd Billy. How's the clarinet, Billy?"

"Didst put a bit more waxey band round her, Billy?"

“Ay, lads, and she’s got a new reed.”

“Don’t split parson’s ears, Billy.”

“Hey, here’s Tommy Johnson and Johnny Buffam. Tak’ care, lads.”

“Where’s the brass?” shouted somebody.

“Hey,” cried another, “stop ’em—big goons aint allowed i’ the pooblic street.”

The two musicians hugged the French horn and ophecleide to their sides, and tried to smile.

“Don’t ’e blow paarson’s brains out wi’ that thing, Johnny Buffam.”

“Dost a make the dead rise wi’ it, Tommy, lad?” cried another.

“Say, Tommy,” said another, “keep thee fist tight i’ the bell, or thee’ll do some un a mischief.”

The appearance of Robinson, the landlord, and his wife, in gorgeous array, saved the brass instrument players from further banter, for the landlord had to be cheered. Then came churchwarden Bultitude, with, close

behind, Jessie and John Maine, and this party had to be cheered.

“ Say, Chutchwarden, why don't a give parson a job for them two ? ” shouted some one ; and, with scarlet cheeks, poor Jessie hurried into the church, where her eyes met John Maine's with no disfavour.

“ Wheer's Tom Podmore ? Why don't he bring his lass ? ” shouted a workman.

But neither Daisy, Tom, nor Banks put in an appearance ; and the crowd were on the look-out for some one else to banter, when the vicar appeared, to be received with deafening cheers, the men pressing forward to shake hands as he went slowly up the path.

“ Say, mun, parson looks straange and wankle,” said one.

“ Ay, but he is pasty-faced ; he's been wucking too hard.”

“ Wucking ! ” said another ; “ why, he's nowt to do.”

“ Nowt to do, lad ! why, he does as much i' one week as thou dost i' a month.”

“Say,” said another, “I’m getting strange and hungry.”

“Theer’ll be plenty to yeat by and by,” said another. “Hey, here’s owd Ransome and Tomson, the man as neither liked gristle nor swarth, but was very fond o’ pig’s feet.”

“It warn’t he, but the servant gell as they had. Say, owd Ransome, hast got a new gell yet?”

“What weer it about t’owd one?” said another.

“Why, they ’most pined her to dead.”

“Hey, I thought they lived well theer.”

“She tow’d my missus that she should leave, for she had beef and mutton and pigeon-pie till she wus sick to dead on ’em.”

“Poor lass!” said another. “That weer her as see owd Ransome’s wife makking the pie.”

“Hey, and what weer that?”

“Ah, she says, ‘Sugarmum and buttermum, it’ll be a straange dear pie, mum.’”

"Here's Dicky Glaire!" now was shouted, and plenty of cheers arose; but the men talked critically about his personal appearance as he got out of the carriage and went up the path with a supercilious smile upon his face.

"He's another pasty-faced un," said one of the chief speakers. "Dicky isn't half the man his father weer."

"Hearken to owd Mother Cakebread," said one of the men; "she says she'd sooner marry tawn's poomp."

"Here's owd Satan comin' to chutch," cried a voice, as Primgeon, the lawyer, a tall, smooth-faced, sallow man, got out of the next carriage, but they cheered him well, and the guests in the next two carriages, when the cry arose—

"Here's the Missus!"

"Gi'e the owd gell a good un, lads. Hats off."

"Three cheers for the doctor."

"Gie's a ride i' the chay, doctor."

"Hooray."

The cheers were hearty enough, as Purley handed out Mrs. Glaire and the bride, and began to move slowly up the path, for the excitement was such that the crowd pressed forward upon them in the midst of the deafening cries, while a faint flush came upon Eve Pelly's face, as she raised her eyes, and the icy look upon her face passed off, thawed by the sunshine of the warm greetings.

“God bless you, Miss Eve—hooray for Miss Eve!”

“Hurray!” shouted one of the leaders of the strike. “May all her bairns be gells.”

“Like their moother,” shouted another.

“Hooray, lads! Gi'e her another; put your showthers into it.”

There was a deafening roar from a couple of hundred throats, and then the poor school-mistress's arrangements were overset, for a voice shouted—

“Fling thee flowers now, bairns;” and the bride went up to the church on a floral carpet,

and with a shower falling upon her from all around.

“What a shame !” cried the school-mistress, as the party disappeared through the porch, and she was carried after them by the crowd which followed.

“Niver mind, owd lass, the bairns can pick 'em up, and fling 'em again.”

Poor flowers, they looked crushed and drooping now, though, as Eve Pelly walked up the damp old aisle, feeling as if it were all some dream, and beginning to tremble now as she approached the altar, where the rest of the party were assembled, from among whom came Richard, who had cast off his supercilious air, and was trying to play his part of bridegroom as became his position.

The young fellow was flushed now with the excitement of the scene, and somewhat carried away by the interest displayed by the town on the occasion of his marriage. He hardly heeded his mother's words as she clung to his hand for a moment, and whispered—

“You see, my son : now take your position that your father won for you, of the first man in Dumford.”

“I will, mother,” he exclaimed, proudly ; and he glanced round the church, to see it crowded, even the aisles being densely packed, a low, murmuring buzz arising, which was checked, though, as the vicar, in his white surplice, moved from behind the great tomb, looking white almost as the linen he wore, and took his place inside the low wooden altar rails, which Jacky Budd bustled officiously to close, giving his lips a smack as if he scented the feasting that generally followed this operation, and hastened to replace the hassocks in front of the little gates.

Eve’s eyes rested upon the vicar’s for a moment as she was led by some one, she could not tell whom, and told to stand in a particular position ; there was a strange whirring sound in her head, and the place was alternately swimming round her, and then coming to a dead stand, and beginning to recede, till the whole

of the chancel seemed to be reproduced with photographic minuteness far away, as if seen through the wrong end of a telescope.

Then the mutterings of the crowd in the church reached her; Mrs. Glaire whispered, "Be strong for my sake," and Richard Glaire, dimly seen, stood beside her; and before her, calm and motionless, divided from her by the quaint old wooden barrier, soon to be divided from her by bars that were a thousand times as strong, stood the man that she knew and owned now, with a kind of desperation, that she loved.

It was a blasphemy, she told herself, to stand there as she did, ready to lie before her Maker; but as she mentally said this she prayed that her sin might be forgiven, and her act looked upon as a sacrifice to save her who had been to her as a mother, and Richard Glaire from a downward career; and as this prayer was repeated she heard the deep, sad voice of the vicar speaking.

The words came slowly, and the utterance grew deeper as, hardly able to bear the bitter agony he experienced, Murray Selwood addressed the first solemn words of the service to those before him, going on to “I require and charge you both,” while the silence in the church was almost painful.

Then turning to Richard, and with his voice rising, he asked the question—

“Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife, to live together after God’s ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou love her, (a pause) comfort her, (another pause) honour, and keep her in sickness and in health; and forsaking all other, keep thee only unto her, (a long and painful pause, during which Richard Glaire winced as he tried to meet the questioning eyes fixed on his, and failed) so long as ye both shall live?”

“I will,” answered Richard, once more trying to meet the eyes that were fixed upon him in solemn question, and failing miserably.

Those who watched the service from close by, remembered afterwards that the vicar's voice became low and trembling as, turning to Eve, he asked her—

“Wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honour, and keep him in sickness and in health; and forsaking all other, keep thee only unto him so long as ye both shall live?”

There was a dead silence, and Richard Glaire felt his breath catch, as if a hand was at his throat, as he saw Eve look wildly round from face to face, and at last let her eyes rest with a horrified expression upon those of the man who had asked her that solemn question. So deep was the silence, that a whisper would have been plainly heard, and the voice of the clerk sounded painful and strange, as he said in a low voice—

“Answer ‘I will.’”

There was another painful pause, and then throwing herself on her knees, and clutching the altar rail as one might have sought sanctuary in days of old, Eve shrieked out—

“No, no, no, no—God forgive me—I do not love him, and I never can!”

Richard Glaire muttered an oath between his teeth, and stooped to raise her, but the book was dropped, and the vicar’s strong arm thrust him away.

“Stand back, sir,” he exclaimed; “this marriage cannot proceed. Mr. Purley.”

The doctor stepped forward, raised, and laid the fainting girl upon the cushions hastily spread upon the stones of the chancel; and, tearing off his surplice, the vicar was the first to bring wine, and take one of the cold thin hands, as he knelt beside her, while Richard, trembling with fury, sought to be heard.

“It’s no use,” said the doctor, firmly.
“Poor girl! over-excitement—nerves un-

strung. We shall have brain fever if there is not the greatest care."

"It's all nonsense," cried Richard, passionately. "A mere whim—a girl's silly fainting-fit. Bring her to, doctor, and the marriage shall go on."

"I told you, sir," said the vicar, sternly, "that it could not go on. Poor girl: she could bear no more."

"But," shrieked Richard, "it shall go on. Do you think I'll be made such a fool of before the town? Curse you, this is your doing, and—"

"Silence, sir," thundered the vicar. "You are in God's house. Leave it this instant."

Richard clenched his fists menacingly, but the stern eyes upon him made him drop them, and he fell back, the crowd opening to let him pass, when Mrs. Glaire tottered to his side.

"My son, my son," she faltered, clinging to his hand, but he flung her off, and strode out at the little chancel door, ran hastily round to

where the carriage with its four greys was in waiting, and as the wondering crowd closed round, he whispered to the nearest post-boy:—

“Quick—to the station. Gallop!”

The crowd parted and the boys raised a cheer; and, as if to make the mocking sounds more painful, a man ran out from the Bull with a red-hot poker, and applied it to one of the little rough cannon.

There was a deafening explosion, and a tremendous jerk, as the frightened horses tore off at full gallop along the High Street, the chariot swaying from side to side on its tall springs, while all the post-boys could do was to keep their seats.

Shrieks and cries arose as the horses tore along, gathering speed at each stride, and growing more frightened at the gathering noise.

On past the various houses, past his home and the works, and Richard clung desperately to the seat. For a moment he thought of

throwing himself out, but in that moment he saw himself caught by the wheel, and whirled round and beaten into a shapeless pulp, and with a cry of horror he sank back.

On still, and on, at a wild gallop ; and, to his horror, Richard saw that the horses were making straight for the great chalk pit, and in imagination he saw the carriage drawn right over the precipice, to fall crushed to atoms upon the hard masses below.

“I cannot bear this,” he exclaimed ; and, turning the handle, he was about to leap out when the fore wheel of the chariot came with fearful violence against the short thick milestone ; there was a tremendous crash as the vehicle was turned completely over, and Richard knew no more.

A dozen stout fellows, who had run panting after the carriage, came up a few minutes later, to find one of the post-boys holding the trembling horses, which, after being released from the wreck, they had succeeded in stop-

ping, and the other was striving hard to extricate Richard from where he lay, crushed and bleeding, amidst the splinters of the broken chariot.

The sturdy foundry-men soon tore away the part of the carriage that held the injured man, and a gate being taken from its hinges, he was carried back to the town; the doctor, who had been attending Eve at the vicarage, where she had been carried, having reached his house to fetch some medicine, which he sent on with a message to Mrs. Glaire, who was in ignorance of the catastrophe, to come home at once.

CHAPTER XIX.

REST AT LAST.

A COUPLE of months had glided away, during which time Richard Glaire had recovered from the severe injuries he had received in the accident, and then, as he said, gone on the continent to recruit his shattered nerves; though in confidence Doctor Purley told his lodger Dick Glaire's nerves were stronger than ever, in consequence of eight weeks' enforced attention to the orders of his medical man.

Richard wanted to get away, for several things had occurred to annoy him. He was only just recovering, when the news reached him that Daisy Banks had become Tom Podmore's wife; and this was at a time

when he was in the habit of saying bitter things to Mrs. Glaire about the disgraceful arrangement by which Eve was still at the vicarage, where she had been carried from the church, and where she had lain through her long illness which followed, during which she was for weeks delirious, and knew neither of those who watched incessantly by her side.

Daisy Banks was her most constant attendant, and had taken up her residence at the vicarage with Miss Purley, who had told the vicar she would do anything to oblige him ; and when he thanked her warmly, had gone up to her room at once to prepare, and sat down, poor woman, and cried with misery, because she was forty-three, very thin, and no one ever had, and probably never would, ask her to be a wife.

So the vicar became Doctor Purley's lodger, never once crossing his own threshold, and Mrs. Glaire went down daily from her son's sick bed, to see how poor Eve sped.

Days and days of anxiety and anxious watching of the doctor's face as he came home from his visits, and little hope. Days when the eminent physician from the county town came over, to give his supplementary advice; and still, though both doctors shook their heads, Eve lived on—a wavering flame, ready to be extinguished by the first rough waft of air.

“Selwood,” said the doctor one night, “I’ve lost over a stone weight since I’ve been attending that poor girl, and I’ve done my best; everything I know or could get from others. I’m going back now, for this is about the critical time, and I shall stay all night. Why, man! Come, come, I say.”

He laid his hand upon the vicar's shoulder, for the strong man's head had gone down upon his hands. He had fought his grief back, and borne so much—now he had given way.

“I am weak,” said the vicar, gently. “Pray go.”

“Yes,” said the stout old fellow with anima-

tion ; and the desponding feeling seemed to have gone. “ Yes, I’ll go and watch while you pray ; and between us, with God’s help, we may save her yet.”

As the night wore on, and the town grew stilled in sleep, the vicar rose and left the house, to go silently down the High Street, past the church, to his own home, where he could lean against the gate and watch for hour after hour the little lighted window with its drawn blind, and the one glowing spot where the candle burned.

Hour after hour, sometimes walking up and down, but always with the prayer upon his lip that she might be spared.

Sometimes a shadow crossed the blind, and a light went through the house. Then all was still again, and the night went on, with the stars that had risen as he watched passing over his head, and at last a faint, pearly light beginning to dawn in the east, and grow broader. The first chirp of a morning bird, as

the pale light grew stronger, answering chirps, and the loud alarm-note of the blackbird that rose from the hedge beside him, dipped down, and skimmed rapidly along the ditch.

The light brightened in the east, but paled in the window of the sick girl's room ; and the watcher's heart sank low, for he knew too well that this was the hour when vitality was at its lowest ebb, and that, perhaps, at this very time the gentle spirit of Eve might be winging its way to a purer realm.

“ My poor love—my love ! ” he murmured, as he leaned upon the gate ; and if ever man prayed fervently, that was a heartfelt prayer breathed from his lips, and it seemed, in his weak worn state, borne upwards by a winged messenger which rose from the field hard by, singing its morning song of joy and praise.

He watched that lark as it rose higher and higher, its clear notes ringing far and wide, but growing gradually fainter and fainter, till the bird seemed lost to his gaze, as the song

was to his ear. But as he watched the sky turned from its pale dawn, tinged with a warmer flush, to one glorious damask fret of orange and gold, lighting up the trees and flowers of his garden as he let his eyes fall to earth, and then, as they rested on the window, it was to see that it was blank and cold and grey.

He could not stir, only stand gazing there with a horrible sinking feeling—a terrible dread, and though the sun rose slowly, his light seemed pale and sickly to the heart-stricken man, whose worst fears seemed confirmed when the door opened, and the heavy, burly figure of the doctor appeared, coming softly down the gravel-walk.

“You here, Selwood!” he exclaimed.

The vicar bowed his head.

“You have been here all night?”

“Yes, but tell me. I can bear it now. Does she sleep?”

“Yes,” said the doctor, pausing; and as he

saw the weary head sink lower, he continued, "Yes, but not the sleep you mean. The crisis is past, dear friend, and Eve Pelly lives."

It was one soft delicious afternoon, when the vicarage garden was aglow with flowers, mellow with sunshine, and joyous with the hum of the insect world, that in obedience to Eve's wish the vicar went down, to find her looking very thin and pale, but inexpressibly sweeter than she had ever seemed before, seated on the old rustic seat beneath the great hedge of mingled holly and yew. Daisy was with her as he entered the garden, but she went into the house, and Eve, with her colour returning slightly, held out one hand and pointed to the place at her side.

He did not take the seat, however, but mastering his emotion, took the trembling hand between his and kissed it.

"You wished to see me?" he said.

“Yes,” said Eve in a whisper; “to thank you for your great—great kindness to me. They tell me I have been here eight weeks. I have been asking Mr. Purley whether I may not go home—to my aunt’s—at least,” she said, growing agitated, “somewhere—somewhere. I must not stay here.”

He had come meaning to be calm, to command himself, knowing that she was delicate and weak; but at those words, and the visions they conjured up, the restraint of months was broken down, and retaining her hand, he sat down beside her.

“Do you wish to go away, Eve?” he said hoarsely, while his strong hand trembled like that he held.

“I cannot trespass on you longer,” she said; and then in a weary, helpless manner, “but I meant to go away—far from here.”

“Eve,” he whispered, “may I tell you of something of which you have never dreamed? I meant to keep it yet for months, but your

words drive me to speak, and at the risk of losing all I must.

“My child, I have known you now for months; I have watched you till I have felt that I knew even the thoughts of your gentle heart; and as I learned them, knowing what I did, life has been to me one long time of agony. Eve, I have loved you with all my heart—so well that I would not give you the pain of knowing it; glad to feel that I was your friend, whom you could trust and turn to in your trouble. Have I kept to that?”

“Yes, yes,” she said, piteously.

“Have I ever broken from the position in which fate placed me, or been traitor to your trust? Have I ever shown you the deep and passionate love that was in my heart?”

“Never, never!” she moaned.

“No,” he exclaimed; “I struggled and fought against it, even yielding to your wishes to perform a duty in which I felt that I was being my own executioner. But

now you are free. You cannot wed this man ! ”

“ No, no, no, ” she whispered, with a shudder.

“ Then give me some little hope—however little. My darling, I will wait for years if you will but tell me—— You turn from me—am I mad in thinking that you might some day trust me with this little hand? You said you must go. Why—why leave me? Oh, Eve—darling! have I kept my secret so long for this? ”

He was rising from his seat when her little hands went up to his, and he sank beside her, as they were placed upon his breast, and Eve’s cheek went down upon them, and she nestled there.

“ Is this a dream? ” he exclaimed.

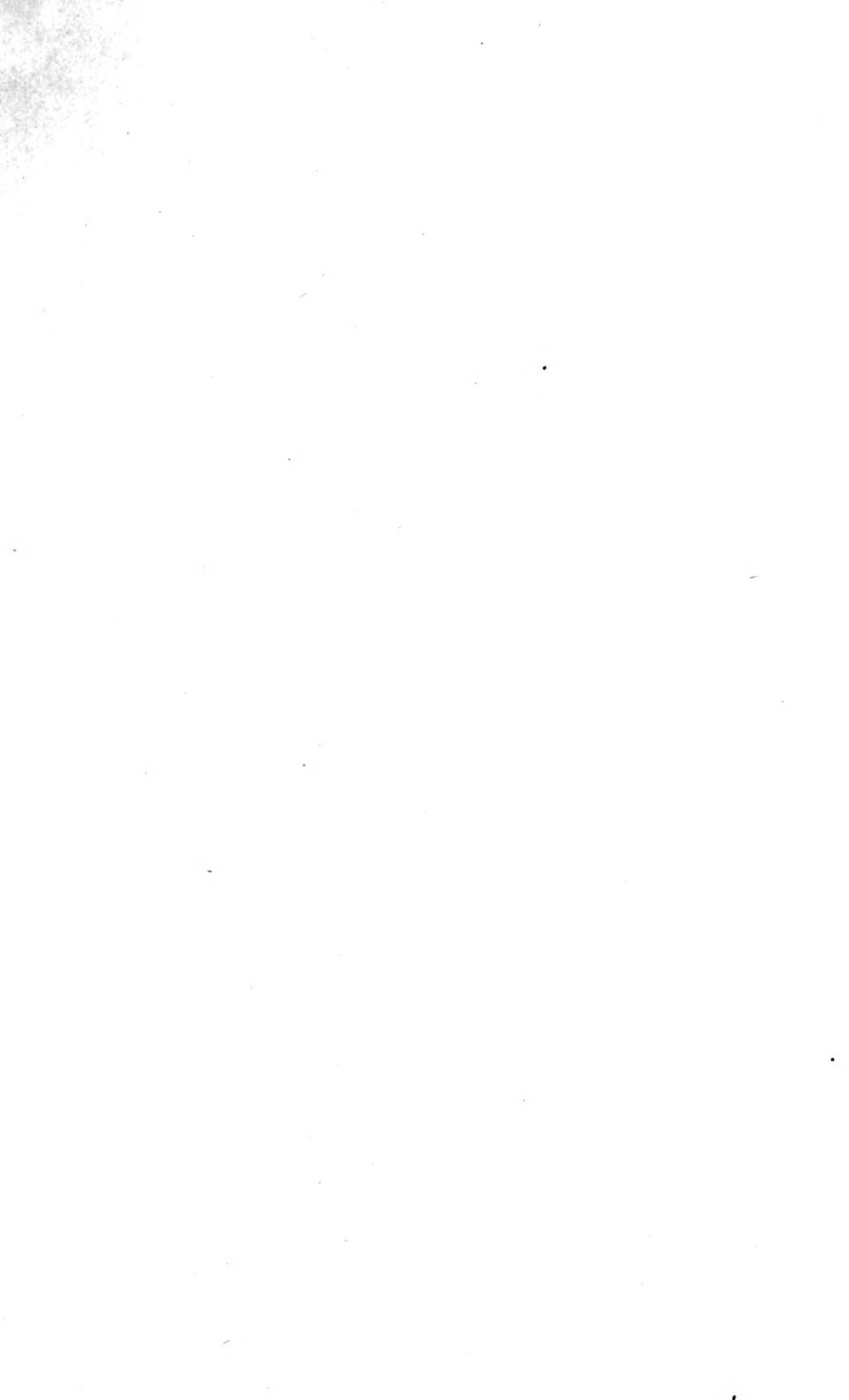
“ One, ” she whispered, “ that I have prayed might some day come true, but trembled, for I thought it was a sin. ”

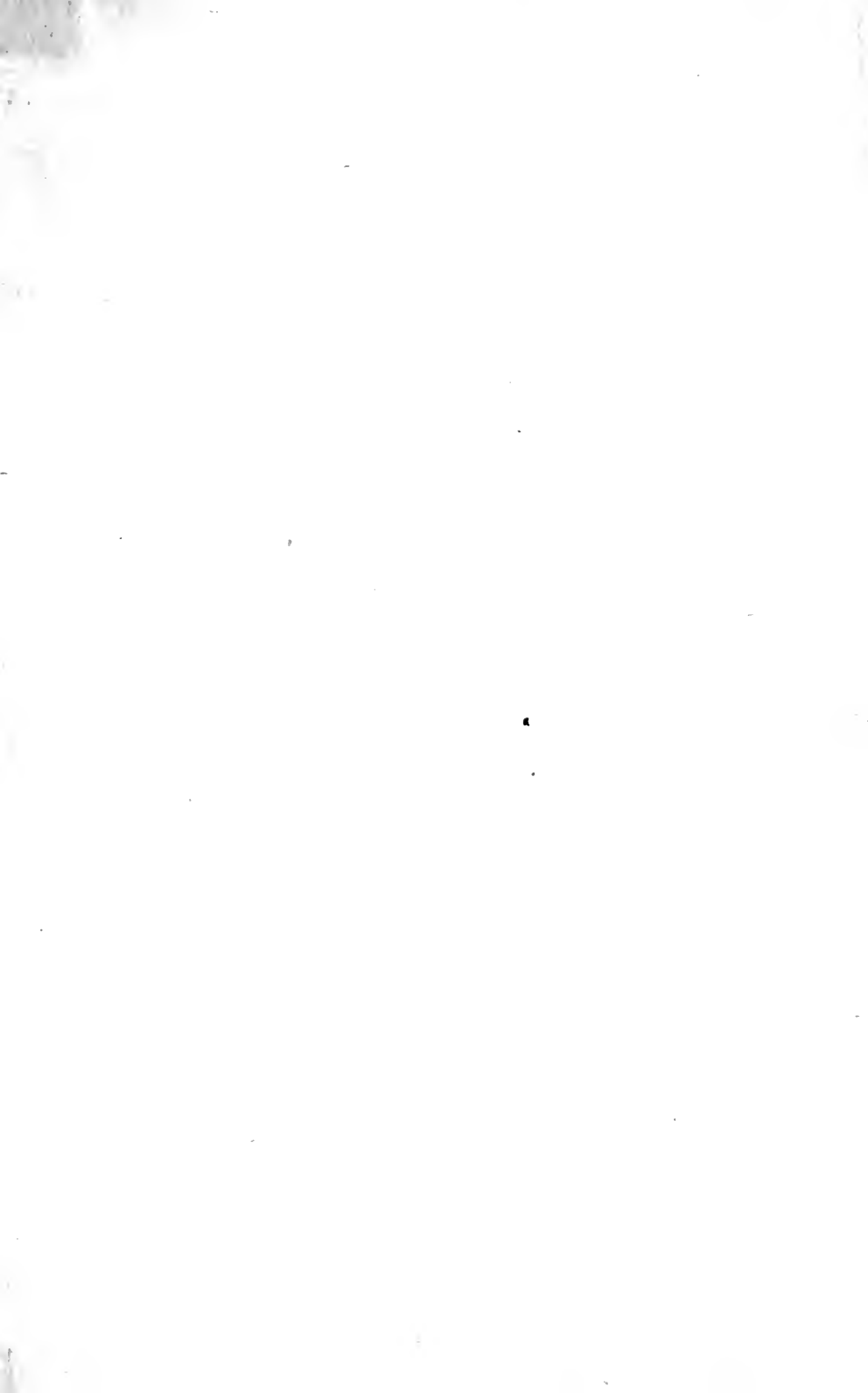
“ And you can love me? ” he cried, drawing her closer and closer to him.

“At last,” she murmured; “and when I thought I was alone in the wide, wide world. Love you!” she faltered, as she hid her face in his breast, “I have loved you from the first.”

THE END.

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